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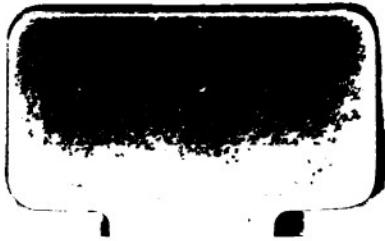
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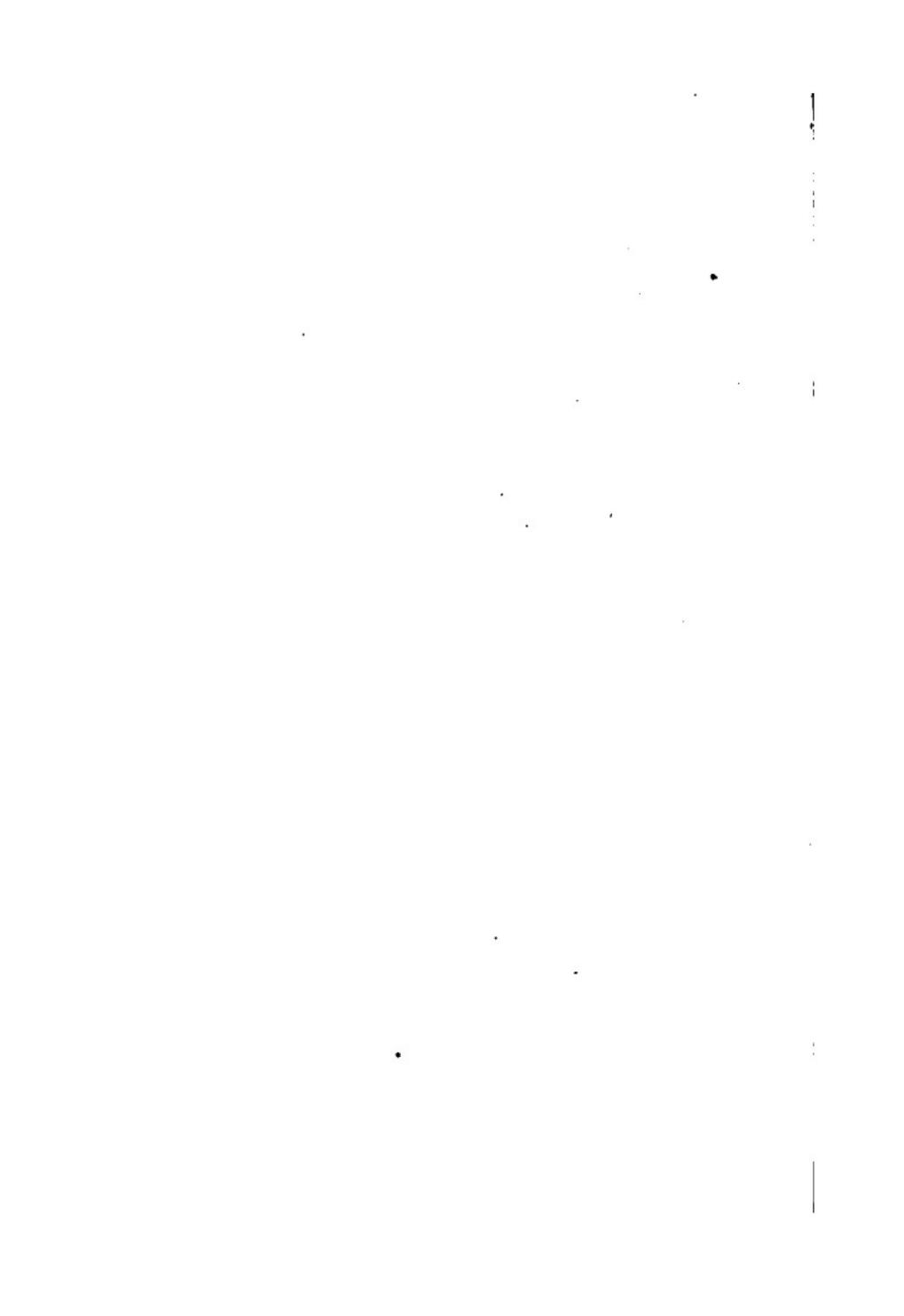
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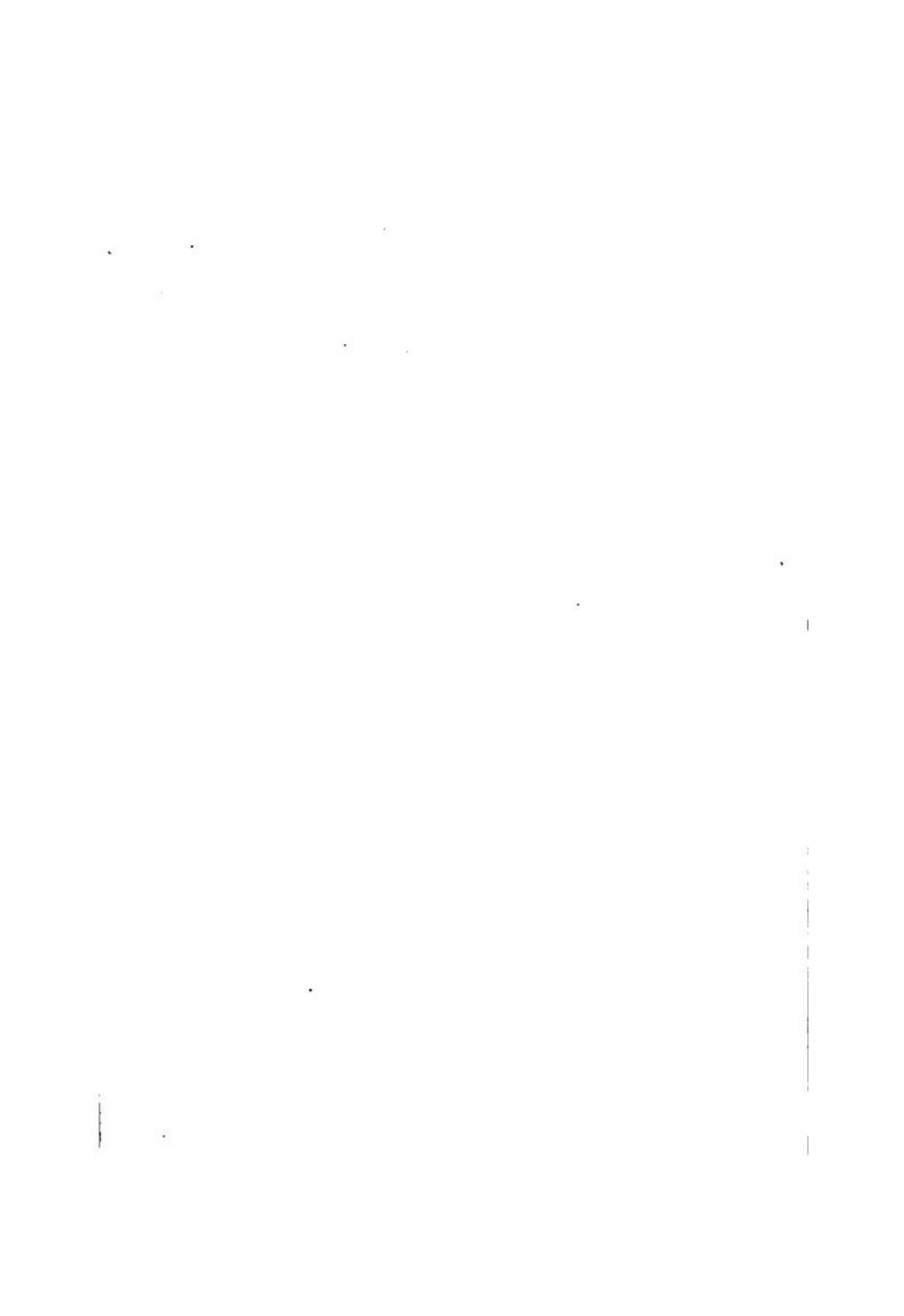
"He made him to suck HONEY OUT OF THE Rock."—
Deut. xxxii. 13.

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PREFACE.

THE present little volume is a continuation of Bible Stories entitled "Bread upon the Waters," and is intended to complete the series on the Old Testament History.

May the young reader be led, by the simple lessons contained in the following pages, to seek for further instruction in the word of God itself, and to find that word to be "sweet," yea, "sweeter than honey and the honey-comb."

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MOAB AND MIDIAN.

I AM going to tell you, dear children, what happened to the people of Israel after the death of Joshua. He died when he was one hundred and ten years old, and was buried in his inheritance, in Mount Ephraim, near the hill Gaash. Now, though the land of Canaan had been divided among the Israelites, and their inheritances appointed, and a great part of the country subdued, yet they were living still in the midst of enemies; and, from time to time, these enemies fought against them, and sometimes overcame them. You should look through the book of Judges, and find who these enemies were.

First, there were the Moabites. These were a nation of very wicked people, who

lived in the southern part of the country, east of the Dead Sea. They were enemies of Israel, and of the God of Israel; and he had himself declared, "A Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord." (Deut. xxiii. 3.) For eighteen years, the king of Moab oppressed the Israelites, and he took away some of their possessions. But how was this? Had not God promised always to protect Israel, and was not he more powerful than the king of Moab? Yes, but you must remember that whenever we read of enemies coming against the Israelites, and oppressing them, and conquering them, we read something else too—that "Israel had done evil in the sight of the Lord;" that was why they were delivered into the power of their enemies. But God was so merciful, that whenever his ungrateful people repented, and confessed their sin, and prayed for pardon, he was always ready to save them, and to send them a deliverer. And so it was now, when Moab oppressed them. "When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord

raised them up a deliverer—Ehud, the son of Gera, a Benjamite.” (Judg. iii. 15.) By this man the king of Moab was killed.

It would take too much time for me to tell you the whole story of the deliverance of Israel from Eglon, the king of Moab, by Ehud. I wish rather to give you a *general* history of these enemies of Israel, and of the manner in which they were conquered; and you must read the *particular* account of each of them in the Bible for yourselves.

The next people who oppressed the Israelites, were the Canaanites, and Jabin, their king, and Sisera, Jabin’s captain. Israel had again done evil, and so again God permitted trouble to come upon them. But when they repented, God was still ready to have mercy and to pardon, and deliver them. The Israelites were at this time, as you may guess from the name of the book, governed by Judges. These Judges were raised up, and appointed by God to direct and teach his people, after the death of Joshua. Many of them were very brave

men, and men of faith too, who ruled and conquered, trusting in the power and help of God.

In the time of king Jabin, a woman was judging Israel. Her name was Deborah; she dwelt in Mount Ephraim, between Ramoth and Bethel, and the children of Israel came to her for judgment. And now, they sent to her to ask her help against king Jabin, and his wicked captain, Sisera. Deborah was not afraid to go herself, and fight against these enemies, for she had great faith in God, and she knew she was acting under his direction. But then she could not go alone. Who went with her? She called Barak, a brave man out of Naphtali, to head the army of Israel, and with him went a large number of soldiers from that tribe, and also from Asher and Zebulon. You remember, I hope, what Moses said of Zebulon; "Rejoice Zebulon in thy going out." Here was one proof of his bravery in war. So this army set out against Jabin, and Deborah said to Barak, "Up, for this is the day in which

the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hand. Is not the Lord gone out before thee? So Barak went down from Mount Tabor, and ten thousand men after him. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots, and all his host, with the edge of the sword before Barak." (Judg. iv. 14, 15.)

It pleased God to deliver his people from Sisera in a very remarkable way. It was a woman who first led them on to fight against him, and it was a woman who put an end to the fight, by slaying him. This last woman was Jael; she pretended to be a friend to Sisera, and when he was running, weary with fighting, from Barak and the Israelitish soldiers, she asked him to come into her tent, and rest himself, and she promised to conceal him. But while he was asleep, "she took a nail of the tent, and a hammer in her hand, and went softly to him, and smote the nail into his temples, and fastened it into the ground, for he was fast asleep, and weary; so he died." Now, we cannot think that it was right of Jael to do this. It was a cruel and treacherous act.

You must remember, that it never can be right to tell a lie, or to deceive for any purpose ; and Jael acted very deceitfully, as well as very cruelly, in what she said and did to Sisera. But you may see from the story, how great God's mercy is, and that when he determines to deliver his people, he can do so by any means he may please to use.

And now, we must pass on to the next oppressors of Israel—the Midianites. These people lived south of Canaan ; they had before fought against the Israelites, while they were in the wilderness. And did God deliver his people from Midian, as well as from the Moabites, and from king Jabin ? Yes, by the hand of Gideon whose history you may read in Judges vi.—viii. These Midianites came in very great numbers ; they were “like grasshoppers for multitude.” What a large army of Israelites would be wanted to fight against them ! No, God did not need a large army. Gideon, indeed, gathered together a great number of soldiers from Naphtali, and Zebulon, and

Asher. But God said, “The people are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, ‘Mine own hand hath saved me.’” (Judg. vii. 2.) And then God lessened the army of Gideon in a very remarkable way, which you will read in this chapter; till, at last, only three hundred soldiers were left, and with that little army, Gideon went against the hosts of Midian. And then, what was the armour of three hundred soldiers? They were not to trust in their swords, and their spears. God commanded that they should carry in their right hand a trumpet, and in their left hand a lamp within a pitcher; and thus armed, they went by night into the camp of Midian. And what happened? “They blew the trumpets, and brake the pitchers, and cried, ‘The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon;’ and all the host ran, and cried, and fled.” So Midian was conquered, in a way as wonderful as that in which Jericho was taken, in the days of Joshua.

There are other deliverances of which I shall tell you in our next lesson, but these will be enough for to-day. And what may we learn from them? I think we may learn three lessons; first, God always punishes sin. Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and then came trouble. God gave them up into the hands of their enemies. The second lesson is—God is always ready to hear and answer prayer. When Israel was in trouble, and cried to the Lord, and prayed for help, that help always came, a deliverer was always sent. And then, the last lesson shall be this—God often uses weak instruments to accomplish great things. This is not so easy for you to understand, so I will explain to you what I mean. God is, you know, all-powerful; he can do anything he pleases, at any time, and in any way—his word and his will are quite enough. He speaks, and it is done; he commands, and it stands fast. But yet, God is generally pleased to make use of instruments, or means; that is, he employs certain men, or certain things, to do what

he himself could do quite as well without them. Thus, he employed Moses and Aaron to bring out the people of Israel from Egypt. He used the rod of Moses very often as an instrument in working miracles before Pharaoh, and afterwards in the wilderness. Ehud was his instrument to slay Eglon, and Jael to destroy Sisera, and Gideon's little army with their trumpets, and pitchers, and lamps, to defeat the great hosts of Midian.

Now, was there any particular power in any of these persons or things? No, the strongest of them all could do nothing without God's help; and many of them were in themselves perfectly weak. What could Gideon's three hundred men have done, without God to fight for them, and with them? So you see that God can use any means or instruments he pleases, to do his will; and that he makes them sufficient for his purpose, however weak they may be in themselves. And what great things these weak instruments have accomplished! Mighty kings and captains subdued—mul-

itudes of enemies put to flight—whole armies destroyed ! But I must not forget to tell you that when God employed Deborah, and Barak, and Gideon, and others, to fight and to conquer, he put into their hearts a great deal of faith and trust in him. This it was which made them so bold and fearless ; for they knew in whom they believed, and were quite sure of victory in his name, and by his strength.

Now, may not you, dear children, learn something from all this ? You say, perhaps, sometimes, “ We are so young, so weak, so little, what can *we* do ? *We* can do nothing to help ourselves, or to help others ; nothing for our own good, nor for God’s glory.” Yes, you may ; weak as you are, you may be instruments in God’s hands for doing something. I may, perhaps, tell you some day of children, young as you, who did much for the good of others, and for the glory of God. They were children of faith and prayer ; and so must you be if you wish to do anything for him. Remember how weak you are in yourselves, and ask

God, if it should be his will, to employ you
as his humble instruments for doing good, in
some way or other to your fellow-creatures.
“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves,
but our sufficiency is of God.” (2 Cor.
iii. 5.)

HYMN.

Who ordered Gideon forth,
To storm the invader's camp,
With arms of little worth,
A pitcher and a lamp?
The trumpets made his coming known,
And all the host was overthrown.

Oh! I have seen the day,
When, with a single word,
God helping me to say,
“My trust is in the Lord,”
My soul has quell'd a thousand foes,
Fearless of all that could oppose.

But unbelief, self-will,
Self-righteousness, and pride,
How often do they steal
My weapon from my side!
Yet Israel's God, and Gideon's Friend,
Will help his servant to the end.

QUESTIONS.

At what age did Joshua die, and where was he buried ?

Who governed Israel after his death ?

What enemies oppressed the Israelites ?

Why were they permitted to do so ?

Whom did God raise up to deliver Israel from the Moabites ?

Who was Jabin, and what was the name of his captain ?

Who fought against Jabin and Sisera ?

What tribes of Israel are particularly mentioned for their bravery in this war ?

What became of Sisera ?

Who next oppressed the Israelites ?

By whom were the Midianites conquered ?

How many soldiers had Gideon to fight for him, and how were they armed ?

Tell me three lessons which we may learn from these stories.

Repeat a text which tells us that we are weak, and that God is strong.

AMMON.

I told you that there were other enemies against whom Israel fought besides Moab and Midian ; and other judges and deliverers to help them to conquer these enemies, besides Ehud, and Deborah, and Barak, and Gideon. I will tell you, to-day, of another brave soldier, who was also a judge in Israel—his name was Jephthah.

The Israelites had again fallen into sin—the sin of idolatry. They had learned to worship the false gods of the heathen nations around them, “ and served Baalim, and Ashtoreth, and the gods of Syria, and the gods of the Philistines ; and forsook the Lord, and served not him.” (Judges x. 6.) And so God was made angry, and he gave them up into the hands of the Ammonites and the Philistines, and they oppressed them for eighteen years. See once more, dear

children, what distress sin always brings. Remember, misery must follow the transgression of God's commands, and the forsaking of his way. And now, the Israelites did as they had done before ; they cried unto the Lord, saying, “ We have sinned against thee, both because we have forsaken our God, and also served Baalim.” But they had often before cried to God in distress ; and then, as soon as the trouble was over, they had fallen into sin again. So this time, God did not *at once* help them. He reminded them of his own past mercy, and of their ingratitude ; and then he said, “ Ye have forsaken me, and served other gods ; wherefore, I will deliver you no more ; go, and cry unto the gods which ye have chosen ; let them deliver you in the time of your tribulation.” Then they really did repent, and in the right way ; for they not only *said* they were sorry, but they showed they were so by what they *did*—“ they put away the strange gods, and served the Lord.” And God was so merciful that he turned to them again, and comforted and helped them.

But the Ammonites were still warring against Israel. These people lived near the land of Gilead, east of the river Jordan. The Israelites had fought against them before they entered Canaan, and had killed Sihon their king. But they were still unsubdued ; and now they came and encamped at Mizpeh, in the land of Gilead. Jephthah was the man raised up by God to fight against them. He was himself a Gileadite, but he had been obliged for many years to live away from his home, because of the unkindness of his brethren. But now they needed his help (for he was a very brave man), and so they asked him to return to them ; and Jephthah was willing to forget their past unkindness, and to come back, and fight for them and for his country.

Jephthah was a man of courage, and of faith too, but he did not always act like a man of wisdom ; and before he went to this battle against Ammon, he did a very rash and unwise thing. I dare say you have already read or heard of Jephthah's rash vow. What was it ? A vow means a

solemn resolution or promise. Jephthah's vow was made to God himself. He said, "If thou wilt, without fail, deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering." (Judges xi 30, 31.)

Then Jephthah went to the war, and he fought and conquered the Ammonites. The battle was ended, and the victory was gained; and Jephthah returned to his house in triumph. And do you know the sad end of this story? His young daughter, his only child, ran out to meet him, full of joy, because her father had gained the victory. But it gave no joy to Jephthah to see her; he remembered his vow, to offer up whatever came out of his house to meet him; and he rent his clothes, and said, "Alas, my daughter, thou hast brought me very low. I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot go back." And soon

after this, he “did with her according to his vow which he had vowed.” Was not this a mournful end to that great victory?

Now before we go on to the next battles of the Israelites, which were against the Philistines, I will just mention some lessons which you may learn from what I have told you of Israel, and Ammon, and Jephthah. The first lesson is about idolatry. Perhaps you think that might be left out, because *you* certainly cannot commit idolatry. Now, this is a great mistake on your part. It is quite possible for you to be idolators. Indeed, I fear that you really are so. I do not mean that you worship the *same idols* that the Israelites did; but you often commit the *same sin*. Look at Ezekiel xiv. You will see there that God was angry with his people, not only because they had idols in their cities, and in their temples, and in their houses, but because they had them in their *hearts*. He said, “These men have set up their idols in their heart.”

What is meant by setting up an idol in

the heart? It is setting our love and affection upon anything instead of God. It is loving anything more than God. So, if you, little children, love your pleasures, or your play, or your toys, or yourselves, more than you love God, you have idols, and you have set them up in your heart, and you commit idolatry. Pray to God, then, to enable you to set your affections upon things above—heavenly things, holy things; and then you will find that there is nothing on earth worth setting your heart upon, compared with God himself, and with the glorious things he has prepared for those who love him.

And then, I have another lesson for you to learn from Jephthah. Perhaps you may wonder what there is for you to learn from him; his life, and his age, and his duties, were all so very different from yours. Still, I think he may teach you something, and I will tell you what it is—a lesson of caution and consideration. I said that in one thing Jephthah acted rashly and unwisely; he made a vow thoughtlessly, and this

occasioned him a great deal of grief and vexation afterwards. He was right to wish to show gratitude to God; right to be willing to give a thank-offering in remembrance of his victory; but he was wrong in the way in which he did all this. God had never told Jephthah to offer up his daughter. God did not require such a sacrifice: and Jephthah acted very wrongly, first in making a vow without consideration; and then in fulfilling it, when he found what distress that vow had brought him into. Now, then, learn a lesson of wisdom from this story of Jephthah. Children are not by nature wise. Solomon says that “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child;” and this folly means *sin* as well; for sin and folly are very much alike, and generally go together. Wicked people, who follow the devices of their own corrupt hearts, must be foolish in God’s sight. Only holy people, who follow the commands of God, can be really wise. Now, you need wisdom in all the little affairs of your lives; and you often do what is foolish, because, like

Jephthah, you act and speak without consideration, without thought. Now shall I give you some rules for becoming wise children? First, then, try never to speak or act without thinking what you are going to say, or what you are going to do. And you will find it well, also, to talk little, and to think much; for Solomon says, "He that refraineth his lips is wise." (Prov. x. 29.)

Then, be ready always to attend to and follow the advice of those who are older and wiser than yourselves. Those who attend to the instructions of kind friends, and teachers, and parents, are wise children; but those who trust to themselves, and will not be directed, are sure to become foolish ones. Solomon tells us this too: he says, "Fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Prov. i. 7.) And, "The ear that heareth the reproof of life, abideth among the wise." (Prov. xv. 31.)

Then, again, study God's word. There you will find directions to keep and teach you at all times, in all your perplexities

and difficulties. David says, "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psa. xix. 7.) "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." (Psa. cxix. 130.) And then, remember that all these rules will not make you really wise, unless you pray to God to direct you himself, and to give you that true and best wisdom, which comes from him, and which he only can bestow. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." (Jas. i. 5.)

HYMN.

Children, would you now be wise?
Sin and folly cast away?
Turn aside from vanities?
Grow in wisdom every day?

Always, then, be "swift to hear,"
And, "to speak" be always "slow,"
Listen with attentive ear,
If you wish to learn and know.

Study God's own holy word;
Take it for your rule and guide;
They have always greatly erred
Who have trusted aught beside.

In whate'er you do or say,
Pray for wisdom to be given,
Then will God direct your way,
And conduct you safe to Heaven.

QUESTIONS.

- Who next fought against Israel ?
What particular sin occasioned God's displeasure with Israel ?
Did they repent ?
In what way ?
Who was raised up to fight for Israel against the Ammonites ?
What wrong or unwise act can you remember in the conduct of Jephthah ?
What was the consequence of this ?
Of what sort of idolatry are we very often guilty ?
What is it to make an idol of anything ?

What lesson should you learn from the story of Jephthah?

Tell me some rules for becoming wise.

What does Solomon say about speaking?

What does he say about receiving instruction?

What does David tell us about God's word?

Repeat a promise that God will give wisdom to those who ask it of him.

THE
LAND OF THE PHILISTINES.

THERE was one nation that gave more trouble to the Israelites than any other. This was the nation of the Philistines. These people inhabited the western part of Canaan. They were continually fighting against the Israelites ; and, though often conquered, they came again and again, and were not entirely subdued for many years. Like the other nations of Canaan, the Philistines were idolaters. Their chief idol was named Dagon. This was an ugly image, half like a human being, and half like a fish ; and the Philistines had a temple for the worship of this idol in their city Ashdod.

The first person raised up by God to fight against these enemies was Samson, a man of the tribe of Dan. I dare say you have all heard something of the story of Samson. He was the strongest man that ever lived, and his strength was given him by God for this very purpose of subduing the Philistines. I do not mean to say much about him. You must yourselves read his history in the book of Judges. There you will find the account of the angel who appeared to his parents before his birth; of the great strength he showed, first, in killing the lion, and afterwards in killing a thousand of the Philistines with the jaw-bone of an ass. There you will read the history of many more of his struggles with the Philistines; and, at last, will come to the sad part of his life—the melancholy story of his deliverance into the hands of his cruel enemies, and how they bound him, and put out his eyes, and carried him to Gaza, and made him grind in the prison. There he stayed for a long time, weak and helpless, for he had become weak because

34 THE LAND OF THE PHILISTINES.

his hair, in which his great strength lay, had been cut off by his cruel wife, who betrayed him to the Philistines. But while he was in the prison at Gaza, his hair began to grow again, and his strength returned, and he ended his life by pulling down, with his arms, the great temple in which his enemies were assembled, and where he had been cruelly brought that he might make sport for them. “ So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life.” (Judges xvi. 30.) Samson judged Israel twenty years. The next judge of whom we read was Eli, and, after him, Samuel the prophet.

And now I must take you again to Shiloh. You know what was standing there during all these long years, in which the judges ruled. There was the tabernacle ; and there, too, were the ark, and all the sacred vessels ; and the worship of God was going on quietly day by day at Shiloh, when other parts of the country were in a state of war and distress. It is a happy

thing for a country when the true God is worshipped and served in it. Shiloh was a blessing to Israel still ; and if they had attended more to their sacred duties there, they would not have suffered as they did from war and enemies, which their own sinful idolatry brought upon them.

And now, dear children, try to fancy yourselves in the tabernacle at Shiloh. Picture to yourselves all the different parts of it, as I have described them to you ; and, when you have done this, I will take you a little apart from the sacred place, to the room in which the priest lives, and in which he sleeps. He is an old man. His hair is white, and his eyes sunk, and his cheeks and forehead are furrowed with age. He is meditating just before he goes to rest. Perhaps he is mourning over the sorrows of his people ; or, perhaps, he is looking forward to happier times—to those times so long foretold, when He to whom Israel are now taught to look by faith in the daily sacrifices, will come to be a better and a more perfect Sacrifice, to take away

the sins of the world. It is night ; but the lamp is still burning in the tabernacle ; and we will leave the old priest for a moment, and go to another part of that sleeping room. There lies a slumbering child on his little couch. You will like to gaze on him, he looks so calm, so happy, so peaceful as he sleeps. His rosy cheek rests upon his hand, and he is smiling in his slumbers. How different from that aged priest ! Yes, he is but just beginning life ; he is like the little rose-bud, just opening in the sunbeams, on a bright summer's morning ; there are no storms, no winds yet, to blight and wither that fair little bud. But the aged man has seen many a rude tempest, and felt many a cold blast of sorrow and trouble. He is like a flower in autumn—its leaves scattered—soon about to perish, and to be seen no more through the long dark winter. But the winter will pass away, and spring will come, and the flower will bloom again. And so with that aged man ; he, too, will rise from the grave which he now

seems sinking into so quickly ; he will rise with a new and glorious body, in the morning of the resurrection, and die no more.

Look once more upon the old priest, and upon the sleeping child, and remember that, if you would be truly happy in your youth, like that little boy, and truly peaceful in your old age, like that aged man, you must have their God for your God, and their Saviour for your Saviour. The same heavenly Father watches over them both—they are both his servants, his children, and, therefore, under his kind love and care.

But you must not yet leave Shiloh. As that child lies slumbering in his bed, he hears a voice. It calls him by name—“ Samuel, Samuel.” The child rises in a moment, he runs to the aged priest, and says, “ Here I am, for thou callest me.” There is no delay, no murmuring in doing this. The child has learned the lesson of *obedience*. But the old man answers, “ I called not; lie down again.” Again the

child lies down; again the voice is heard, as before, calling, "Samuel, Samuel;" and again that little boy runs to the priest, and says, "Here I am, for thou didst call me." But is it not distressing to a child to be thus disturbed from his sleep? Why does he go so willingly? There are no complaints still; he does not seem to think of himself, and of his own ease and comfort. This child has learned the lesson of *self-denial*. But the old man has not called him, so again the little boy lies down and falls asleep. And then, the third time, the voice calls, "Samuel, Samuel;" and a third time that child runs to the priest, aged Eli, and says, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." And still he makes no complaint; he does not say he is tired of being called so many times, and all in vain too; no, for Samuel has learnt that lesson, so difficult for children to learn and to practise—the lesson of *patience*. And now, old Eli begins to think that "God had called the child." Perhaps the Lord has some wonderful message, some great

command to give his people, and he has chosen to give it to them by that little child. And so Eli says to him, “ Go, lie down ; and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, ‘ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.’ ” And Eli was right. It was God who called the child. And soon the same voice was heard again in that solemn night, saying, “ Samuel, Samuel.” Then Samuel arose, and humbly answered, as he had been taught, “ Speak, for thy servant heareth.”

Dear children, do you not love this little servant of God ? and should not you like to be, as he was, obedient, and self-denying, and patient, and humble ? And should you not think it an honour and a blessing indeed, if God would come to *your* beds when you are asleep, and speak to *you*, as he did to little Samuel ? And he *does* call you ; not by your names, not by a voice which you can hear with your bodily ears, but by his word, by his ministers, by his Spirit. He bids you come to him, and love him, and serve him ; and he promises to

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bless you, and to make you his children.
Will you, then, like little Samuel, attend
to these gracious calls, and say, as he did,
“ Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ?”
(1 Sam. iii. 9.)

HYMN.

Lord, teach a little child to pray,
Thy grace betimes impart ;
And grant thy Holy Spirit may
Renew my youthful heart.

May Jesus all my sins forgive,
And wash away their stain,
And fit my soul with him to live,
And in his kingdom reign.

To him, let little children come,
For he has said they may ;
He'll lead them to his heavenly home,
And wipe their tears away.

For all who early seek his face
Shall surely taste his love ;
Jesus shall guide them by his grace,
To dwell with him above.

QUESTIONS.

What other nation frequently oppressed the Israelites ?

What idol did they worship ?

Who was raised up to fight against them ?

What can you tell me of Samson's history ?

What was his death ?

Where was Samuel brought up ?

What was the name of the priest ?

When did God call Samuel ?

How many times ?

What did Samuel show in his conduct at that time ?

What were the words Ely taught Samuel to say when God called him ?

Does God now call *you* ?

How does he call you ?

What does he say to you ?

What should your answer be to his call ?

THE
LAND OF THE PHILISTINES,
(CONTINUED.)

WE had so much to say in our last lesson about little Samuel, that we almost forgot the Philistines, and their country; so I must tell you more about them to-day. And now, you must suppose that many years have passed away since all that I told you in the last story happened. Eli, the aged priest, has left this world of sorrow, and his happy soul is with God in heaven. Little Samuel has grown up to be a man; he has become a judge and a prophet in Israel, and he is still serving, faithfully

and actively, that God whom he so early learned to love and to obey. And Shiloh —ah, what a change is there! The ark, the type of Christ—the emblem of God's presence is gone; and with it are gone the honour and blessedness of Israel. “The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken.” (1 Sam. iv. 22.)

And why is all this? The cause is the same which brought all the former troubles upon Israel—sin. Sin in the people, and in the priest too; for Eli's sons did not grow up before him, as young Samuel did, in the faith, and fear, and love of God. No, though they were priests, and had to perform so many sacred offices in the tabernacle, yet they were wicked men in their hearts, and in their conduct too; and Eli, though he served God himself, did not restrain his sons as he should have done. And therefore God was angry; and he declared that Eli's wicked sons should be punished in a very awful way—that in one day they should both of them die. Part of this message had been given to

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Samuel in that night when God spoke to him for the first time, and Samuel told it faithfully to Eli. And this dreadful threat was all accomplished. The Philistines came again to fight against Israel ; “and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines ; and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men.”

(1 Sam. iv. 2.)

God was thus showing his displeasure ; he had turned away from his rebellious people, and would not help them. Then the Israelites said, “ Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines ? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.” So the ark was brought ; and Eli’s two sons, Hophni and Phineas, came with it. But the ark itself could do them no good, if He whom it represented had departed from them. “ The Philistines fought, and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man into his tent ; and there was a very great slaughter, for there

fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken ; and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were slain."

The news was brought to old Eli as he sat by the gate. A messenger came, and told him all that had happened to Israel, and to his two sons, and to the ark ; "and when he made mention of the ark of God, he fell from off the seat backward, by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died."

The ark was taken away to the land of the Philistines, and placed in the temple of their god, Dagon, in Ashdod. But God made Dagon fall down before it, to show his own power, and the weakness of the idol ; and then the ark was taken about from one city of the Philistines to another ; from Ashdod to Gath, and from Gath to Ekron. But, wherever it went, a plague from God went with it ; and so, at last, the Philistines determined to send it back to its own land. They placed it in a cart, drawn by two kine, and these kine, guided

by God himself, took the right way back to the land of Israel, and did not stop until they came to Bethshemesh, in the tribe of Judah. It was afterwards removed from Beth-shemesh, and taken to Kirjath-jearim, another city of Judah, where it remained twenty years. You will find the reason why the ark was taken from Beth-shemesh, if you read 1 Samuel vi. While at Kirjath-jearim, it was kept by Eleazar, in the house of his father, Abinadab.

These twenty years were years of great sorrow to Israel. It was sad to be without the visible emblem of God's presence among them—I mean the ark; and sad, too, to feel that their own sin had deprived them of it. But God did not leave them quite without instruction and without comfort. Samuel was still with them; and now, in their time of sorrow, he was ready to advise them, and to tell them what to do. The Philistines were again preparing to fight against them, and Samuel knew that there was only one way of gaining the

victory over them ; if the Israelites wished to be safe and happy again, they must seek pardon and help from God. So Samuel said, "If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only ; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines."

(1 Sam. vii 3.)

So all the people came together ; they first put away their idols, and then they assembled at Mizpeh, and Samuel offered up a sacrifice, and prayed for them to the Lord. And that gracious God, who had taken such care of them in times past, was ready to help them still. And when the Philistines drew near to battle, he sent thunder from heaven upon them, and they were smitten before Israel. Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Eben-ezer, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." So the Philistines were subdued, and they came no more into the coast of Israel all the days of Samuel.

Now, do you know the meaning of the name which Samuel gave to that stone? It means, the stone of help. The Israelites used often to set up stones in remembrance of any great event, and to call them by particular names; you can recollect one instance, at least, of this. Moses, you know, after he had defeated Amalek at Rephidim, built an altar of stones, and called it Jehovah-Nissi—the Lord my Banner. It was right, when God showed them any particular mercy, for them to feel particular gratitude for it; and as they knew how apt they were to forget God's mercy, they set up these memorials to help them to keep it in mind. And here is a lesson for us. There is not one person living, whether old or young as you are, who has not many mercies to remember. But some of these mercies are so common, that instead of being grateful to God for making them common, we hardly notice them at all. And yet, if they should be taken away from us only for one day, how we should miss them! Food, and clothing, and fire, to warm us,

and air, and sunshine, and all those things which make us happy and comfortable day by day, and health to enjoy them too—these we call *common* mercies, because they come so often. But then, besides these, there are what we may call *particular* mercies—great deliverances, which happen, perhaps, only once or twice in our whole lives. Suppose we are saved from some very great danger, from a dreadful accident, or from a dangerous illness, which might soon have taken away our lives—this is a *particular*, an uncommon, an unexpected mercy; and we should in a *particular* manner, thank God for it.

Now, cannot even *you* remember something of this kind? Have you never been exposed to some great danger, and delivered from it? There are few children as old as you are, who have *not*. And, though you yourselves may not be able to remember it, those around you have not forgotten all the care and anxiety they have felt on your account—how they have watched over you when you were ill, and

trembled for you when you were in danger, and rejoiced over you when you were restored to them alive, and safe, and well. Yes, dear children, your bodies might now have been lying dead and motionless in those little graves in the churchyard, of which I was one day telling you ; or you might have been sickly children, lying upon your beds, full of pain. But, instead of this, you are alive and well—full of health, and spirits, and joy—without pain, or want, or distress of any kind. Oh, what *thankful* children you should be ! Should you not feel as Samuel and the Israelites did when they set up the stone, and said, “Hitherto hath the Lord helped us ?” And what can you do to show your gratitude ? What Eben-ezer can you raise ? What can you give to God to tell him how thankful you feel for such mercies ? God asks only one thing of you, and that is your hearts ; he says to each of you, “Give me thy heart.” That means your love, your affections ; and if you give those to God, a great deal more will follow. You will wish

to give your health, your powers of body and mind, all you have, and all you are, to his service, and for his glory. And all these things together would be little indeed to give to him who first gave them to you, and who has done much more for you than you can remember, or yet fully understand. He has given you, not only these mercies we have just been talking about, but a greater gift still—he has given his own Son to die for you, to redeem you with his precious blood. “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

HYMN.

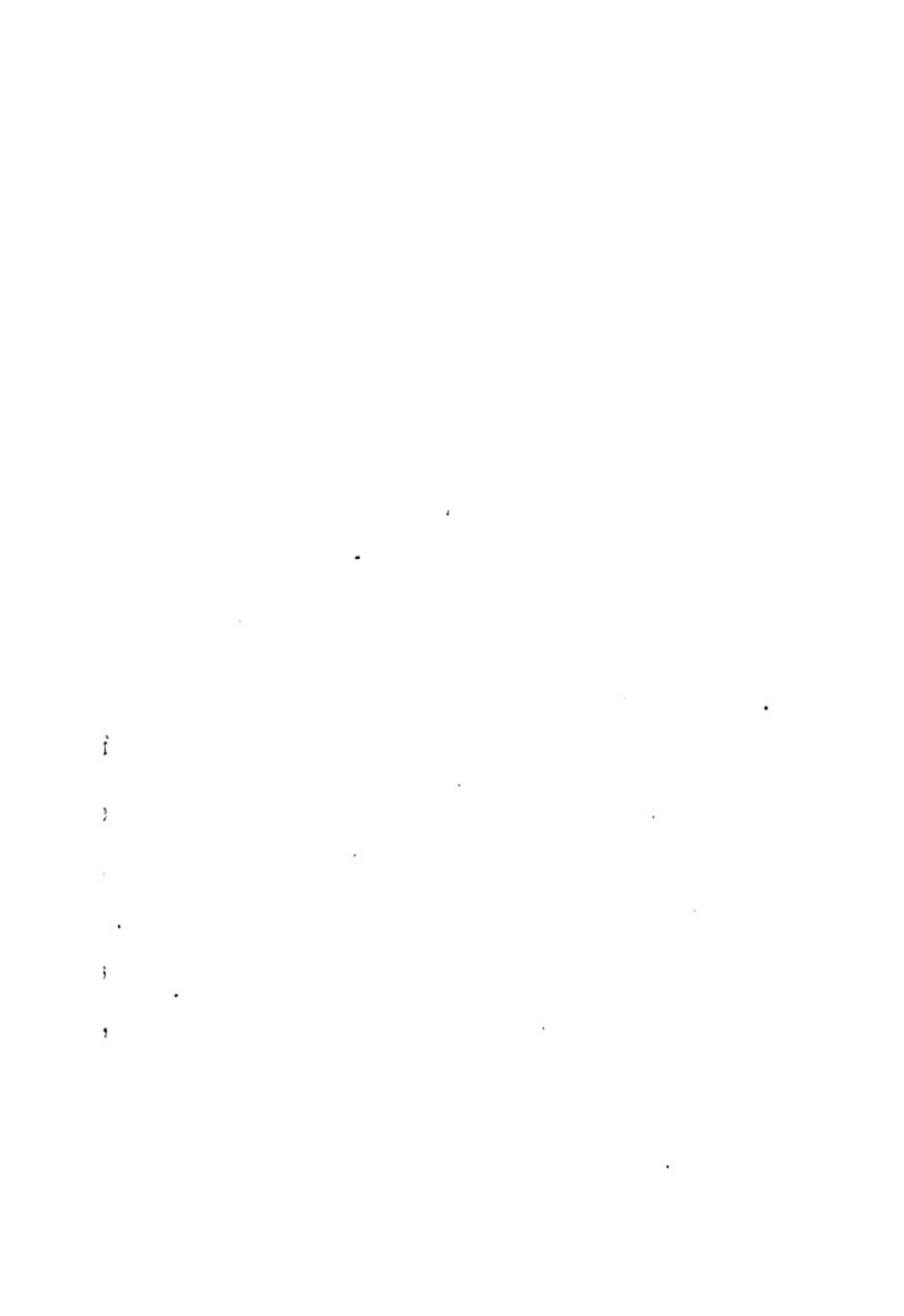
Almighty King, whose wondrous hand
Supports the weight of sea and land;
Whose grace is such a boundless store,
No heart shall break that sighs for more;

Thy providence supplies my food,
And 'tis thy blessing makes it good;
My soul is nourished by thy word;
Let soul and body praise the Lord.

My streams of outward comfort came
 From him who built this earthly frame;
 Whate'er I want his bounty gives,
 By whom my soul for ever lives.

QUESTIONS.

- What was the character of Eli's sons ?
 What message was sent to Eli by God respecting them ?
 By whom were the Israelites defeated ?
 What happened in that battle ?
 What was the end of Eli ?
 Where was the ark taken ?
 What became of it afterwards ?
 Why did the Philistines send it back ?
 How did Samuel exhort the people of Israel ?
 How were they delivered from the Philistines ?
 How did they commemorate this deliverance ?
 What is the meaning of Eben-ezer ?
 What lesson should be learnt from this story ?
 Repeat a text which tells us *why* and *how* we are to glorify God ?



Mount Zion.



MOUNT ZION.

SAMUEL was now an old man. The Israelites, who had been governed for many years by judges, wished for a change of rulers, and they asked Samuel to give them a king. Now this was not right. God himself was their King. He appointed their laws; he led their armies to battle; he gave them victory, and took care of them at all times; and therefore it was rebellion against Him to desire this change. God was angry with their discontent, and their pride, and their ingratitude; yet still he gave them their wish, and directed Samuel to anoint Saul, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, to be the first king of Israel. The account of this you may read in 1 Sam. viii.—x.

Saul at first reigned well; but he was

not really a holy man. He was very different from Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and others, who had led and ruled the Israelites in past times; he did not live in the faith and fear of God, as they had done, and therefore he could not have God's favour and blessing, which had made them so successful and so happy. Saul forsook God, and then God forsook him, and took away the kingdom from his family and gave it to another and better man. This man was David, of whom you have very often heard. He is called in Scripture, "the man after God's own heart," because, unlike Saul, he sought, in everything he did, to please God, and asked his grace to enable him to do so. David is also called "the sweet singer of Israel," because, he wrote so many of those beautiful songs of praise, which we now call the "Psalms of David." He was anointed by Samuel, a little time before the death of that holy man, but he did not become king at once. Saul reigned during his life; and then, when he was dead, David succeeded to the throne.

Saul knew, for many years before his death, that God had appointed David to be king after him, and this made him feel angry and jealous, so that he hated David, and made many attempts to kill him. God preserved his chosen servant from the hand of Saul; but David was obliged to live in exile during a great part of Saul's reign, and often to take refuge in caves, among the rocky hills of Judah, to hide himself from his cruel enemy.

Saul's death was a very awful one. He was defeated in battle by the Philistines, and ended his life by falling on his own sword. So Saul died, and then David became king, first of a part, and afterwards of all the country; for there was a long war between his friends and those of Saul's family before he was quite settled in his kingdom.

David's was a long reign, but I am not going to tell you all the different events which happened in it. These, as well as his early history, you must read for yourselves in the books of Samuel and 1 Chroni-

cles. I shall only mention a few things which king David did, and explain some particulars about him, which, perhaps, you will not so easily understand alone.

A great part of David's reign was spent in fighting against his enemies, and subduing them. These enemies you have heard of already, for they had often oppressed Israel in former days. They were the Philistines, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and others besides. But these were at last subdued; and when David died, he left a peaceful kingdom to Solomon his son and successor. Another very important thing David did, was to bring back the ark, and to place it in the city of Jerusalem. The day in which this was done was a joyful one for David, and for all his people, and he wrote a beautiful psalm in remembrance of it. This was the twenty-fourth Psalm. It was sung by the priests and Levites when the ark was brought into the city, and the gates were opened to receive it. "Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come

in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, oh ye gates, even lift them up ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory." (Psa. xxiv. 7—10.) You know that the ark was a type of Christ, who is indeed the King of glory. Love to him was the cause of the holy joy of David, and of the priests and people, when it was brought back into the city of Jerusalem.

But why was it brought to Jerusalem, and not to Shiloh? Shiloh, as I told you, was not at this time what it once had been. It was a forsaken and desolate place. Jerusalem had become the chief city in Canaan. David himself had conquered it from the Jebusites, who possessed it before, and built his house there; and so it was made the royal city. David wished to have the ark in the place where he dwelt, as it was now the most important place in all the land. The ark still remained within the curtains

of the tabernacle ; and David desired very much to build for it a beautiful temple, and to dedicate that temple to the service of God. But God, who appoints the work of each of his servants, did not permit David to do this. His work was the conquest of his enemies, and the establishing of his kingdom ; and, therefore, God said that Solomon, David's son, should build the temple in his peaceful and quiet reign. So David prepared all the materials, the wood, and the stones, and the gold, and the silver, and the brass, and the iron ; and he charged his son Solomon to build it, according to the will of God. In another lesson I shall have more to tell you about Solomon and the temple. But you will like first to know a little about the city of Jerusalem, of which we shall now speak so frequently.

This beautiful city was situated upon hills. There is a verse in one of the Psalms which tells us this—"As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth even for ever." (Psa. cxxv. 2.)

One of these mountains was Moriah, where the temple afterwards stood. Another was Zion, which was the strong-hold David took from the Jebusites, and where he afterwards lived. This part of Jerusalem was called the city of David: and the whole city is sometimes called Zion, because that was the principal place in it. We read very often of Mount Zion, and of its strength and security. “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. Walk about Zion, and go round about her; tell the towers thereof.” (Psa. xlviii. 2, 12.) “They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.” (Psa. cxxv. 1.)

But I was to tell you something more respecting David. I have not lately said anything to you about types and emblems; but there are some in our lesson to-day which we must not pass over. David was a very remarkable type of Christ; and, I think, if you will attend to me for a few

minutes longer, you will be able to understand in what respects he was so. And first, I must tell you what the name David signifies. It means "the beloved one." David was indeed beloved of God. He was, as I said before, "the man after God's own heart." God had chosen him to be king, preserved him in dangers, made a covenant with him, and promised never to forsake him; so that David might well be called the beloved of God. But there is one much greater and mightier than David, who is called the beloved. Who is this? The Lord Jesus Christ. God the Father says of him, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." (Isa. xlvi. 1.) And in the New Testament, we read more than once that it was declared from heaven, "This is my beloved Son." David, then, was a type of Christ in his *name*. He was a type of him, too, in his *office*. You know what this means. The particular work, and business, and duty, to which a person is appointed, is called his *office*. Aaron, you

remember, typified Christ in his office of High Priest. David typified him in his office of King. David was a great and powerful king, and so in that respect he was a type of Jesus, who is "King of kings; and Lord of lords." (Rev. xix. 16.) Christ, too, is often called the King of Israel, and the King of Zion. In the second Psalm, where the Father speaks of Christ, he says, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psa. iii. 6.) David, too, was a conquering king. A large portion of his reign was spent in fighting and conquests. And so Christ, the King of kings, will one day subdue all *his* enemies. "He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. (1 Cor. xv. 25.) When he comes again, he will come as a great Conqueror. "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." (Rev. xix. 15.)

But once more. You know that David founded and established his kingdom in Jerusalem, or Zion. Now, in the Bible,

God's church, or people, both in earth and heaven, are called by these names. St. Paul says, "Ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." (Heb. xii. 22.) He is there speaking to Christians, to the people of Christ, and telling them of all their blessings and privileges. These blessings and privileges are often compared to those which the Israelites of old enjoyed in Jerusalem. That was indeed a favoured and a happy city. It had in it the ark, and the service of God, and his appointed priests and ministers, and his worshipping people; and David the king was in the midst of them, ruling over them, protecting them, fighting for them, and subduing their enemies and his own. And so the real people of God now are enjoying blessings still greater than these. They have the blessings of the gospel; they have God's appointed ministers to instruct them; his word to guide and direct them; his Spirit to teach and comfort them; and Christ himself, the Beloved One, the true David,

is their King and Ruler. He fights for them against the enemies of their souls, so that they are "more than conquerors" through him who loves them. And the time will come when all these enemies will be subdued; and then, in the *Heavenly* Zion, the New Jerusalem, there will be no more fighting, but only peace and joy for ever. David founded the earthly Zion; Christ himself founded the spiritual Zion —his church here on earth, and his church above in heaven. It is founded on the "Rock of Ages;" and, therefore, it is so firm that nothing can shake it; it will stand fast for ever.

Dear children, do you belong to this Zion? You do by name and by profession; but this is not enough. You must belong to Zion in *spirit*, as well as in *name* and *profession*, or you will not share the blessings of faithful citizens and subjects hereafter. David had some rebellious subjects in his kingdom, and he commanded that they should be treated, not like his own people, but like enemies. And so, Christ

will not admit into his presence hereafter any who have not been faithful and obedient to him, even though they may profess to dwell in his kingdom. This is an awful thought. Pray that you may now be made obedient subjects to Christ, and that he may reign in your hearts; then you will indeed be citizens of the true Zion, and be one day admitted into that bright city, the Heavenly Jerusalem, of which we read that it has “no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.” (Rev xxi. 23.)

HYMN.

Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
He whose word cannot be broken,
Formed thee for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
What can shake thy sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
Thou mayst smile at all thy foes.

See, the streams of living waters,
Springing from eternal love,
Well supply thy sons and daughters,
And all fear of want remove.
Who can faint while such a river
Ever flows their thirst t'assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord the Giver,
Never fails from age to age.

Saviour, if in Zion's city
Thou record my humble name,
Let the world deride or pity,
I may well endure the shame.
Fading is the sinner's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion's children know.

QUESTIONS.

- What did the Israelites ask of Samuel ?
Why was this displeasing to God ?
Who was the first king of Israel ?
What was his character, and his end ?
Who succeeded him ?
What is David called in Scripture ?
How was David occupied the greater
part of his reign ?

How did he show his love for the service
of God ?

What was now the chief city of Canaan ?

What is it often called ?

Of whom was David a type ?

In what respects ?

What does the name David signify ?

Repeat some texts which speak of Christ
as a King ?

Of what was Jerusalem or Zion typical ?

What is the character of those who be-
long to the spiritual or heavenly Zion ?

Repeat a text which describes the glory
of the heavenly Jerusalem.

MOUNT MORIAH.

BEFORE the death of David, he made his son Solomon king. Solomon's reign was very different from his father's, for almost all of it was quiet and peaceful. At the beginning, indeed, some very wicked men, who were enemies to Solomon and to his kingdom, were put to death ; but afterwards, till near the close of his reign, all his own people obeyed him, and the nations around submitted to his authority. Israel was in a very prosperous state during this reign. We are told, "Israel and Judah were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude ; and dwelt every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon." (1 Kings iv. 20, 25.)

Solomon was famous for his wisdom ; this wisdom was given him by God himself, in answer to Solomon's prayer. God "appeared to Solomon in a dream by night, and said, 'Ask what I shall give thee.' And Solomon said, 'Give thy servant an understanding heart.'" (1 Kings iii. 5, 9.) God was pleased with Solomon's choice, and gave him wisdom, greater than that of any man who ever lived. It was so great, that his fame spread to distant nations, and people came from all parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

The greatest act in Solomon's reign was the building of the temple. You remember, God had appointed Solomon for this work ; David had charged him to perform it, and had supplied him with the materials—with gold, and silver, and precious stones, in abundance. Solomon himself was ready and willing to undertake this great work, and the foundation of the temple was laid in the fourth year of his reign ; but it was seven years in building. The temple was built upon Mount Moriah.

This mountain is to be remembered also, for two very remarkable events which happened upon it. One of these took place many hundred years before the building of Solomon's temple; the other, many hundred years after. But I will mention them both here, in order that, when you look at the map of Jerusalem, and think of the temple built on Mount Moriah, you may, at the same time, remember the two other events which happened upon that very mountain. The first was the offering of Isaac; I need hardly remind you of the beautiful story we read in Genesis xxii., because I hope you already know it perfectly. But look at the second verse of that chapter, and there you will read that it was to the land of Moriah God sent Abraham, and that Isaac was to be offered upon a mountain there. This mountain was the same as that on which the temple was afterwards built. The offering of Isaac by his father Abraham, was typical of the offering of Christ; and so, also, was the sacrifice of the ram, which, you remember, Abraham

offered instead of his son, when the Lord called to him, and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad." And it was on that very mount, too, that, almost a thousand years after, He whom Isaac typified, was really offered. It was there that the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified. This is the other event for you to remember when you think of Mount Moriah. And as Isaac carried the wood for the burnt-offering, and was afterwards bound, and laid upon the altar—so Jesus carried the cross on which he was to suffer, to that same spot ; and there he was nailed upon it, to bleed, and to die. Isaac, you know, did not actually die. He was taken from the altar, and the ram was sacrificed upon it instead ; and so that ram represented Jesus, who suffered, and bled, and died, instead of us sinners who were in danger of everlasting death. Try then, dear children, to remember both these events in connection with Mount Moriah.

But we must now go back to the temple. It was a very beautiful building. Inside it was divided like the tabernacle, into the

Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies ; but in addition to these, there were different courts where the people assembled for worship, and chambers which were used for various purposes of the temple service. The sacred vessels were the same as those in the tabernacle, only they were larger and more in number ; so that the temple was altogether a much more magnificent building than the tabernacle had been. And it was not a tent as that was, to be taken down and set up again, but a firm, durable building, to last for years. It was made of stones, squared, and fitted one into another, and all these were prepared beforehand, so that there was no noise of cutting and hewing stone during the building of the temple. The inside was of fir and cedar wood, overlaid with gold ; the trees for the temple were the gift of Hiram, king of Tyre, a famous city, which you find on the north-eastern coast of Canaan. Hiram had been a friend to David, and he wished to show kindness also to his son ; and when Solomon wrote to him, and asked his help,

Hiram promised to give him as many cedar and fir trees as he wanted for the building of the temple. They grew in the forest of Lebanon, which was in Hiram's kingdom. There they were cut down, and floated along the coast as far as Joppa; and then Solomon sent his servants to convey them to Jerusalem. Cedar trees are still to be seen growing in Lebanon, but there are now only a very few, not an abundance as in Hiram's time. Some of them are supposed to be many hundred years old.

The climate of Lebanon is fresh and cold, and in winter the mountains are covered with snow; this snow melts in the summer, and the water flows into the river Jordan, and swells it so much, that it overflows its banks in the time of harvest. You remember this was the case when the Israelites crossed it; and God wrought a miracle for them, and made the waters divide, and stand on a heap, till his people had passed over.

When the temple was finished, Solomon assembled all the people; and then it was

solemnly dedicated, or given up to the service of God. Solomon offered a very beautiful prayer at the dedication of the temple, which you may read in 1 Kings viii. And God heard that prayer, and promised always to attend to the supplications of his people in his house, as long as they were faithful to him and to his service.

I told you that many people came from distant lands to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Among these, was the queen of Sheba; you will read the account of her visit in 1 Kings x. This queen came from a country a long way from Jerusalem to see and to hear Solomon. She had heard at home the report of his greatness and of his wisdom, but she was not satisfied with merely hearing the report; she determined to go and see for herself. It was a long and troublesome journey; for, in those times, travelling was not easy and rapid as it is now. But the queen of Sheba never repented that she took that journey; for she found in Jerusalem and in Solomon more than enough to repay her for all her trouble on the road.

And instead of being disappointed with what she saw, she told Solomon that it was even more than she expected ; for that the half had not been told her. Do you remember what our Lord said to the Jews about the queen of Sheba ? “ The queen of the south shall rise up in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon ; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” (Matt. xii. 42.) She will condemn those unbelieving people, because she took much trouble, and went a long way to hear Solomon ; while the Jews, who had Christ himself in their own land, and in their own city, ever ready to instruct them, did not care to come to him, and despised his wisdom, and would not attend to his teaching, nor listen to the gracious words which he spoke.

It is almost time to end our lesson ; but, before we do so, I must tell you a little more about Solomon, and show you that he, as well as David, was a type of Christ.

One thing in which you remember David typified Jesus, was in his name; so also did Solomon. That name signified Peaceful. Now, do you not think that this is a name which belongs to Christ? He is the giver of peace to us—he made peace for us; in his words, and actions, and character, he was peaceful—and he is called in the Bible, “the Prince of peace.” (Isa. ix. 6.) And then, Solomon typified Christ in his wisdom. You have heard how wise he was; but his wisdom was nothing when compared to Christ’s. Christ is called Wisdom; it is one of his names—Christ the Wisdom of God.” (1 Cor. i. 24.) And, as Solomon made known his wisdom to all those who came to him, so Jesus will give wisdom to us, if we ask it of him—holy, heavenly wisdom. He can make us “wise unto salvation;” he “of God is made unto us wisdom.” (1 Cor. i. 30.) Solomon, too, was a type of Christ in his office of King. So was David; but David represented Christ as a *conquering* king, fighting and subduing his enemies. Solomon repre-

sented him as a *peaceful* king, reigning over obedient people, when all his enemies have been made subject to him. In Psalm lxxii., we find a great deal about this peaceful reign. That Psalm is called, "A Psalm for Solomon;" but if you read it, you will see that it speaks also of one greater than Solomon—of that Peaceful One whom he typified. Solomon was a great king, and had many obedient subjects, and his reign was long and prosperous; but it came to an end at last, and the latter part of it was not so glorious as the beginning, as you will find by reading his history. But it will not be so with Christ and his reign. "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end." (Isa. ix. 7.) His kingdom will be an everlasting one. "In his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth. His name shall endure for ever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun, and men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed." (Psa. lxxii. 7, 17.) And

Isaiah also foretells this peaceful kingdom, when he says, "They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. xi. 9.)

And who will those be who will enjoy all this peace and happiness? Not those who rebel against Jesus now, and will not obey his word; but those in whose hearts he reigns, and who are his willing and faithful subjects. Dear children, if you wish to share the glory of Christ's kingdom hereafter, you must know something of the peace of that kingdom now; you must, through Jesus, be at peace with God; you must have in your hearts that peace which Jesus promised to his disciples, when he said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." (John xiv. 27.) That peace which his people enjoy when their sins are pardoned, and their hearts are made holy, and their souls are saved—peace of which the people of this world know nothing. And you must have the spirit of

love and peace in your hearts also, or you will not be fit for a kingdom where there will be no angry feelings, no unkind tempers, no hasty words. Pray God to give you this spirit of love—love to God, and love to your fellow-creatures. Remember what Paul said to those to whom he wrote, “Be of one mind, live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you.”
(2 Cor. xiii. 11.)

HYMN.

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run,
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To him shall endless prayer be made,
And princes throng to crown his head;
His name, like incense, shall arise
With every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on his love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on his name.

Blessings abound where'er he reigns,
The pris'ner leaps to loose his chains;
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are bless'd.

Let every creature rise and bring
Peculiar honours to our King;
Angels descend with songs again,
And earth repeat the loud Amen.

QUESTIONS.

What was the great difference between
David's reign and Solomon's?

What is said of Israel and Judah during
Solomon's reign?

For what was Solomon so much cele-
brated?

What was the greatest act of his reign?

Where was the temple built?

Tell me two remarkable events which
happened on that mount?

Of what was the temple built?

How were the cedar and fir trees pro-
cured?

In what way was the temple dedicated to God?

Who came to hear Solomon's wisdom?

What lesson may we learn from her?

Of whom was Solomon a type?

In what respects was Solomon a type of Christ?

In what parts of the Bible do we read of the peaceful kingdom of Christ?

What spirit must you have now, if you hope to enjoy the blessings of that kingdom hereafter?

Repeat the words of Christ to his disciples, when he gave them the blessing of peace.

THE BROOK CHERITH,

AND

THE MOUNT CARMEL.

WE must pass over several years in the history of Canaan and the people of Israel. During those years Solomon's reign ended, and a great change took place in the kingdom. I told you that the latter part of Solomon's reign was less glorious than the former part of it;—why was this? It was because Solomon, in his old age, was tempted to forsake God, and to worship the idols of the heathen nations around.

Was it not strange that a wise man, like Solomon, should fall into so foolish a sin as idolatry? Yes; but this just shows us what man's heart is by nature; the heart,

I mean, of every one of us. We are all by nature foolish, as well as wicked. And though some people may be wise and learned in the knowledge of this world, yet, unless God himself teach them, they cannot become wise in eternal and heavenly things—"wise unto salvation." And even after people have been taught, by the Holy Spirit, to love and serve God, as Solomon had been, if they forget to watch and pray, they will surely fall again into sin and folly. So it was with Solomon. He forsook God for a time, and then God left him to himself, and he fell into these grievous and foolish sins. This was sad, indeed, after his long and happy reign; but before his death, we cannot doubt that Solomon repented, and that he sought and obtained pardon, and had God's blessing and favour again. But punishment followed his sin. It was the transgression of Solomon, and of his people too, which caused the change which took place in the kingdom after his death. God said he would take away ten tribes of the kingdom

of Israel from Rehoboam, Solomon's son, and give them to another man. This man was named Jeroboam. He was the first king of *Israel*; that is, of the ten tribes, apart from the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The kings of Judah were all children or descendants of David, according to God's promise; but the kings of Israel were taken from many different families; and wicked men very often got possession of the crown by murder and bloodshed. All the kings of Israel were wicked; they forsook the true God, and worshipped idols. But, though many of the kings of Judah also were wicked, there were some among them who followed the example of David and Solomon, and had God's favour and blessing.

It was during the reigns of these kings of Israel and Judah, that most of the prophets lived whose writings we have in the Bible. Some of these prophesied in Israel, others in Judah. They were sent by God to reprove the people for their sins, and to warn them of God's anger; or to

comfort them in sorrow, and to encourage them in difficulty and danger. But there were other prophets who did this besides those whose names you read at the head of the books in the Bible, called the prophetical books. One of these prophets was Elijah; he lived in the reign of Ahab, who was, perhaps, the most wicked of all the kings of Israel. I shall have a good deal to tell you of the prophet Elijah.

And now we must leave Jerusalem, where our last stories have taken us, for another part of the land of Canaan; not a city, nor a town, nor even a village; but a solitary spot beyond the river Jordan. There, among the trees and herbs that grew around, flowed a little brook called Cherith. And here it is that we first read about the prophet Elijah. God had told King Ahab, by Elijah, that there should be no dew nor rain in the land for a long time; and then he said to Elijah, "Turn thee eastward and hide thyself by the brook Cherith that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have com-

manded the ravens to feed thee there." (1 Kings xvii. 3, 4.)

Elijah was a man of faith. He did not doubt God's word; but obeyed immediately, and went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, as God commanded him. Now, this showed trust and confidence in God.

When first the command came, and when Elijah was told the way in which he should be fed, do you not think it must have seemed very strange to him? Were ravens ever before known thus to bring bread and meat to feed man? Was it not quite contrary to their nature to do so? And yet Elijah believed God's word, and trusted him: and he did this not once only, but day after day, as long as he stayed at the brook Cherith. He had no food but what the ravens brought him, and no way of obtaining it: and they brought him only just enough for his daily support, no more than was necessary for the time: so that he had to wait patiently till the next supply came. But that supply never failed; for it did not depend upon the ravens, but upon the promise of Him

who made those ravens and everything in the world, and who orders everything according to his own will, and for the good of his people.

Dear children, I wish you to learn from Elijah a lesson of dependence upon God. Every day you repeat in your prayers these words, "Give us this day our daily bread." Did you ever think *why* Jesus taught us to ask for bread, every day? It was to teach us this very thing—that we depend upon God for our food every day we live. We have it from God, as Elijah had, though not in the same way; and if he withheld his providential care from us for only one day, we should perish of hunger. But he who could make the ravens feed Elijah, will not forget his people now, but will provide all things really necessary both for their bodies and their souls. "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." (Psa. xxxiv. 10.) And so Jesus told his disciples to "take no thought for the morrow"—that is, not to be too anxious and uneasy about our future wants, remembering that

our "Heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these things." (Matt. vi. 32.)

But, after a time, the brook Cherith dried up, "because there had been no rain in the land;" and then God again called Elijah, and told him to go to Zarephath, for he had commanded a widow woman there to sustain him. Now this command seemed as strange as the other. How could a poor widow, scarcely able to provide for herself, do anything to help Elijah? But it was God's word; so Elijah again believed, and obeyed. He went to Zarephath. You will find this place in the map, not far from Tyre. It was also called Zidon. When he came there, he found the widow gathering sticks. He asked her for water; and as she was going to fetch it, he said to her, "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand." Then the poor woman told Elijah how very great her poverty was. She had only a little meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, and she was gathering two sticks, that she might go in and

dress it for herself and for her son, that they might eat it and die. But Elijah said, "Go, and make me thereof a little cake first: for, thus saith the Lord, 'The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, till the Lord send rain upon the earth.'" The poor woman heard Elijah's words, and believed them, and did as he told her; and she, and he, and her son, ate many days; and the barrel of meal did not waste, and the cruse of oil did not fail, according to God's word by his servant Elijah.

Now here is another lesson for us—what is it? What may we learn from the conduct of that poor widow? I might talk to you about her faith, and her obedience, and her trust in God; but as we have had lessons upon these before, I will ask you now to think only of her *self-denial*. Do you know what is meant by self-denial? It is denying ourselves something that we value, for the benefit of others. This was what that poor widow did, or at least what she was willing to do; for when Elijah

first asked her for water, and when she went so readily to fetch it, she knew not what wonderful things would soon be done for her support and comfort. Water at that time was very scarce, and therefore very valuable. And, no doubt, she would have given Elijah some of her little supply of food also, without any promise of more being sent to her, or any assurance that the meal and oil would not fail. Now, try to imitate the conduct of this good woman; seek to have a self-denying spirit, as she had. You are never likely, indeed, to be called to practise such self-denial as she was ready to show; but every day you will find opportunities of giving up your own will, your own pleasure, for the good of others. And you should acquire the habit of doing this now; for human nature is so selfish, that if you do not learn self-denial early, you will become not only selfish children, but you may, perhaps, grow up selfish, and continue to be so all your lives. And how sad to be a selfish man, or a selfish woman, living only for self, doing

no good in the world; nothing for the happiness of others, nothing for the glory of God! Remember what St. Paul says about this: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man, also, on the things of others." (Phil. ii. 4.) And remember, too, that you cannot really be Christians, followers of Christ, without knowing and practising self-denial. Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke ix. 23.)

And now you must read for yourselves the rest of this interesting chapter, which tells us the story of the death of the poor widow's little boy, and how God raised him up when Elijah prayed: and then I will pass on to another part of the prophet's history.

Look in the map for Mount Carmel; you will find it on the west of Canaan; it is a high rock, jutting out into the Mediterranean Sea. I am going to tell you something that Elijah did upon that mountain. You remember that Ahab was king of Israel

at this time, and that he was a very wicked man. God had before sent a message to him by Elijah, to tell him that there would be neither rain nor dew for a long time in the land of Israel. God now sent to him again, to tell him that rain would shortly come, and to command him to assemble all his prophets upon this mountain of Carmel. These were the prophets of Baal, the idol that Ahab worshipped, and other false prophets whom his wife Jezebel honoured, while she persecuted the true messengers of God, and tried to destroy them. All these wicked men, about eight hundred and fifty, were assembled and brought together to Mount Carmel ; and there Elijah met them ; and a great many of the people of Israel were present also. And why did they all assemble ? What was Elijah to say to them ? He wished to convince the people of the sin and folly of the idolatry which the wicked prophets were teaching them, and to bring them back to the service of the true God. He spoke very solemnly to them, and said, " How long halt ye

between two opinions ? If the Lord be God, follow Him ; but if Baal, then follow him." (1 Kings xviii. 21.)

Then he advised them to try for themselves, and to see whether Baal or the Lord were the true God. The people were willing that this should be done ; so Elijah said "Choose a bullock for yourselves, and dress it first, and call on the name of your gods ; but put no fire under." So they did this, and offered their bullock, and prayed to Baal, saying, "O Baal, hear us ;" expecting that fire would come from Baal to consume the sacrifice. But there was no fire, no voice, nor any that answered. Then they cried louder, and cut themselves with knives and lancets, hoping to make Baal attend to them ; but still no voice came, and no fire.

Then Elijah said that he would call upon his God, and see whether He would be, like Baal, inattentive to his prayers, or whether he would hear, and answer, and send fire from Heaven to consume the sacrifice. So Elijah built an altar of stones, and laid

wood upon it ; then he killed a bullock, and cut it in pieces, and laid it on the altar. And when all was prepared, he commanded a great quantity of water to be brought, and poured upon the altar, upon the sacrifice, and upon the wood. He did this, that the people might be assured that he was not trying to deceive them by secretly putting fire himself under the sacrifice. They would know that if the water was poured upon it, there could be no fire ; for what is wet will not readily burn. And this would make God's power appear still greater, in sending fire from Heaven at the prayer of Elijah. But how could Elijah find such a great quantity of water, when there had been no rain for more than three years, and when everything was dry and parched ? If you look again at the map, you will see that at Carmel water could be easily be obtained. The Mediterranean Sea was very near ; and, besides this, the river Kishon flowed just at the foot of the mountain.

When Elijah had prepared his sacrifice,

he prayed to God, and said, "O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again." And almost before the prayer was ended, the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and dried up all the water that had been poured upon the altar. Then the people were indeed convinced, and they cried out, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God." Elijah, at the command of God, put to death those wicked prophets who had so long deceived the people, and led them into idolatry. "He brought them to the brook Kishon, and slew them there."

Now, we have already had two lessons to-day; one was a lesson of trust in God; the other, of self-denial. Here is a third—a lesson of *holy boldness*. Do you understand what this means? There are some kinds of boldness which are *not* holy, but wicked. There is boldness in sin, fearlessness of offending God; we are not

to be bold in this way, but humble, meek, gentle, fearful of doing anything to displease God. But the boldness I mean is zeal, and courage, and earnestness in God's service. This was what Elijah showed. He was in the midst of enemies, people who hated him because he served the true God; and yet he did not fear to declare his faith, and to reprove them for their sins, when God sent him to do so. And there were times, long after the days of Elijah, when God's people needed as much courage and boldness to declare their love to Christ, as the good prophet did when he stood on Carmel surrounded by the false prophets, and said, "How long halt ye between two opinions?"

There have been times, even in this country, when people could not confess Christ without danger of suffering, and, perhaps, dying for it. We ought to be thankful that it is not so now. But still we should seek to have Elijah's spirit of holy boldness, and never be ashamed of the cause of God, and Christ, and true

religion. Jesus said, " Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.)

But there is still one lesson more for you to learn from this story—a lesson of *decision*. What is decision? It means making up our minds about some particular thing, in such a way as not easily to be shaken afterwards. To do this in a *bad* thing would be obstinacy; but to do it in a *right* thing is what we call decision, firmness, perseverance. Now, what is it you should learn to be decided in, from this story of Elijah at Carmel? In religion, learn to make up your minds, and to decide whether you will follow sin or holiness; the desires of your own hearts, or the will and commands of God; the things of this world, or the things of heaven. You are not too young to decide, not too young to begin to serve God; and happy, indeed, will it be for you if you now really, and from your hearts, decide, as the people of Israel did

in the days of Joshua, "We will serve the Lord." (Josh. xxiv. 21.)

HYMN.

Ashamed of Jesus! can it be,
A mortal man ashamed of thee?
Ashamed of thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days!

Ashamed of Jesus!—that dear Friend
On whom my hopes of Heaven depend!
No: when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.

Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away,
No tears to wipe, no joys to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then, nor is my boasting vain—
Till then, I boast a Saviour slain;
And oh! may this my glory be,
That Saviour's not ashamed of me!

QUESTIONS.

What do we read of the latter part of Solomon's reign ?

What should we learn from this ?

What change in the kingdom took place after his death ?

In whose reign did the prophet Elijah live ?

Where was he sent by God, and how was he sustained there ?

What lesson may we learn from Elijah at the Brook Cherith ?

Where was he afterwards sent, and to whom ?

What may we learn from the widow of Zarephath ?

Where is Mount Carmel, and what happened there ?

Tell me two more lessons to be learned from this story, and a text on each.

SCENE ON MOUNT HOREB.

I HAVE more to tell you to-day, dear children, about Elijah. We left him, you remember, on Mount Carmel, just after he had, at God's command, put to death the false prophets of Baal. God had told him that rain would soon be sent to refresh the dry and thirsty land, and Elijah was now to watch for the fulfilment of this promise. So he went up to the top of Carmel, and cast himself down upon the earth, and sent his servant to look toward the sea—the Mediterranean Sea, which flowed at the foot of Carmel. And while the servant went to look whether any signs of rain had yet appeared, Elijah spent the time in prayer. He asked God to remember his promise, and to send the refreshing showers

which were so much needed; and to show the unbelieving king, Ahab, that he was indeed a faithful, as well as a powerful, God. The servant soon returned, and said, "There is nothing." The sky was still bright and clear; no clouds were to be seen; no signs of storm or rain.

Had God forgotten his promise? Would he not attend to his servant's prayer? Elijah did not think this; he felt sure that God would, in his own good time, send the rain as he had promised. So he said to the servant, "Go again seven times." And when that servant went the seventh time, and not till then, he saw a little cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, rising out of the sea; and he went and told his master. And Elijah said, "Go, tell Ahab; prepare thy chariot, that the rain stop thee not." And in a very little time the sky grew black with clouds, and the heavy drops began to fall, and there was a great rain.

Now, this shows us how true and faithful God is; that when he makes a promise, he never forgets it, never fails to do as he has

said. And it teaches us, too, what we should do when we want any blessing from God, which he has promised in his word to give us. We should pray for it; and if the blessing does not come directly, we should not be discouraged, but ask for it again and again—it will surely come at last. And we should wait for an answer to our prayers, in faith and confidence that the answer will be given in due time. “God is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. Hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?” (Num. xxiii. 19.)

And what are the blessings for which we should pray? We may ask for temporal blessings (that is, blessings for this life, blessings for the body), as far as they may be right and good for us, and according to God’s will. We are taught, as I told you last time, to pray for “our daily bread”—everything needful for us, and no more. And so we may ask, as Elijah did, for the rain to refresh and water the earth, and for

the sunshine to warm it, and for fruitful seasons; for all these things come from God, and we may depend upon him for them. But there are far higher and better blessings than all these for which we should pray; I mean spiritual blessings, blessings for the soul and for eternity. When we pray, we should remember that our souls are, by nature, just like the dry, parched ground, when Elijah asked God to send the rain. They are dry, and hard, and barren, and unfruitful. Now, the Holy Spirit is often compared in the Bible to rain and dew; we read these beautiful promises of God:—"I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water-courses." (Isa. xliv. 3, 4.) "The Lord shall satisfy thy soul in drought, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." (Isa. lviii. 11.) And so we should ask God to fulfil these promises

to us—to make our hearts soft by the influence of his Holy Spirit, that they may be fitted to receive the seed of his holy word ; and to water that seed continually, that it may spring up, and bear fruit to the praise and glory of God.

And now, let us follow Elijah in a long journey which he took from Mount Carmel to Beersheba in the land of Judah. Why did he go there ? Jezebel, Ahab's wicked queen, had heard what had been done to the false prophets ; and she was very angry with Elijah, and sent a message to him, threatening to put him to death. So he fled for his life, and went a day's journey into the wilderness, and sat down under a tree, and requested for himself that he might die. He said, " Now, O Lord, take away my life, for I am not better than my fathers." (1 Kings xix. 4.) Was this a right prayer ? No ; this request of Elijah is not one which we ought to make to God. When we are in pain, and suffering, and trouble, and sorrow, we should pray for patience to bear them, and for grace to

profit by them ; but not for death to take us away from them before God's appointed time. Besides, we should remember that these things come from God, as well as our blessings ; and though they are not pleasant, but very painful, yet they are intended for our good ; and therefore, we should seek not only to be patient, but, also, to be thankful under them. Job showed patience in his affliction, when he said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord." (Job i. 21.) And David must have felt thankfulness when he said, " Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I kept thy word." (Psa. cxix. 67.)

Elijah was a holy man ; but, like others of whom we have read before, he was sometimes tempted to sin : and the sin to which he was now tempted was impatience. But God is kind and merciful to his servants ; he feels for them in all their troubles. " Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear him." (Psa. ciii. 13.) And so now, in-

stead of being angry with Elijah, he sent an angel to comfort him. "As he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold an angel touched him, and said unto him, 'Arise and eat.' And he looked, and behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head; and he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him, and said, 'Arise, and eat, because the journey is too great for thee.' And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights, unto Horeb the mount of God."

We often read in the Bible, of holy angels being sent by God to comfort and to protect his people. They are called "ministering spirits sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation." (Heb. i. 14.) We cannot now see these holy beings, as God's people in days of old were sometimes permitted to do; but we may believe that angels are about us continually, to comfort us and to do us good,

if we are God's children. When we sleep, they may be watching our beds; and when we walk abroad, they may be at our side; perhaps they guard us from many a danger, and help us in many a difficulty which we do not see or know. And then, when at last God's people are taken from this earth, the angels are sent to bear their happy spirits to the bright world above, as we know they carried Lazarus of old into Abraham's bosom. May we not learn something from these ministering spirits, dear children? Let us be obedient and active in God's service, as they are; ever seeking to do good, and to promote God's glory; and so obey his will on earth, as the holy angels do in heaven.

But we must go back to Elijah. After he had been comforted and refreshed by the angel, he went, you remember, to Mount Horeb, and there remained forty days and forty nights. What can you recollect of Mount Horeb? There it was that God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, when he sent him to king Pharaoh.

And there it was afterwards that the wonderful miracle was performed, to give the people of Israel drink in the wilderness, when the rock was smitten, and the water flowed out. And now, what did Elijah do in Horeb? He went into a cave, and the word of the Lord came to him there, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And Elijah told his sorrows to God, and said, "The children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." Then God told Elijah to go and stand upon the mount, before the Lord. "And the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he

wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And behold there came a voice unto him, and said, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings xix. 10--13.)

Now, the Lord did all this to convince Elijah of his power, and to teach him that the same God who could do these great things at his will, was able, also, to protect his people, and to destroy his enemies, if he so pleased. And then, when God spoke to Elijah in the still small voice, perhaps it was to teach him that he is a God of love and gentleness too, as well as of strength and power; and that he could, if he saw fit, work as much by the gentle sound of his voice, as by the dreadful thunder of his power. And God encouraged Elijah by telling him that there were still many faithful ones in Israel, who had never bowed down to Baal; and he told him of another prophet who should do the work of Elijah when he himself was taken away. That other prophet was Elisha. Elijah, at the command of God, when he left Horeb,

went to call Elisha. He found him ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen; and Elijah cast his mantle upon him. Then Elisha left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, "Let me kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee." So he went, and bade his parents farewell, and then went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

We have often heard of God appearing to his people, and speaking to them in different ways, and for different purposes. But there is something particularly wonderful in the way in which God at this time appeared and spoke to Elijah. Let us try if we cannot learn something from it for our own good. I have said before that God speaks to *us*: and he does so in many different ways, just as when he passed by the cave where Elijah was, he first sent a wind, and then a fire, and then an earthquake, before he spoke by the still small voice. Now, I will tell you some of the ways in which God speaks to us.

First, he speaks to us by his *providence*.

You know what this means—the care God takes of all his creatures—the way in which he rules over them—the events which he causes to happen to them—all these we call God's providence. Now, these things speak to us from God: the creatures which he has made, and the events which he brings about, day by day, have all a voice and a message, if we would but listen and attend to them. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day utterereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” (Psa. xix. 1, 2.) They tell us how *great* God is, who made those wonderful things, and who upholds them year after year by his almighty power. And the flowers that bloom in the fields and gardens, and the birds which sing in the trees, and the insects that sport in the sunshine—all these tell how *good* God is, how kind, how merciful, to make this beautiful world, and so many happy creatures to live in it, and enjoy it. And the little events which happen, and which some-

times we hardly notice—they have messages for us too. They tell us of his care, and how he marks every one of the creatures he has made. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Father. And will he not then much more care for *us*? for we are “of more value than many sparrows.” And the blossoms when they fade, and the leaves when they fall from the trees in autumn, and the passing days, and months, and seasons, and years, and the changes they bring with them—all teach us a lesson, and a very solemn one too, dear children. They seem to say, “All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field. The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, because the spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it. Surely the people is grass.” (Isa. xl. 6, 7.)

Another way in which God speaks to us is by his *word*—the written word which we hear from his ministers. God sends many messages to us all in his word. He tells us to repent, and to turn to him, and to believe in Jesus, that we may be saved.

But many people do not heed these messages, or will not obey them. And so God has another and a louder way of speaking, and that is by his *judgments*. Sometimes we hear of sudden death; of dreadful accidents; of a storm, perhaps, or a fire, or a plague, taking away many immortal souls in a moment, without warning, without time to ask for pardon or salvation. Why does God send such awful judgments as these? One reason is, that the careless people who are still living may take warning from them. Those judgments say to them, "Be ye ready; now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

I have told you of three ways in which God speaks to us—by his providence; by his word; and by his judgments; and yet there are many people in the world who have heard all the messages sent to them in these ways, and yet have not attended, have not repented, have not been any the better for them. How is this? You remember it is said in the chapter we have

just read, that God was not in the wind, nor in the fire, nor in the earthquake ; but when the still small voice came, then Elijah knew directly that God was there. Now, something like this happens when God sends messages to people by his providence, and by his word, and by his judgments. They hear them, perhaps, and wonder at them, and are alarmed by them ; and yet there is no real effect upon their hearts, unless God speaks to them in another way, and that is by *his Spirit*. When God speaks to our hearts, it is by the still small voice of his Holy Spirit ; a voice that cannot be heard by the bodily ear ; and yet it is so powerful that it cannot be disregarded by the heart. It forces people to listen, and to attend, and to obey ; and makes them say, as Samuel did, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth ;" and as Saul did, long after, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?" (Acts ix. 6.)

Now, dear children, it is quite certain that God has spoken to *you* in some of these ways at least ; but have you listened ?

Have you attended? Have you obeyed? If not, do so now; and when he says to you, as he does in his word, "Seek ye my face;" let your answer be, as David's was, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psa. xxvii. 8.)

HYMN.

I sing the almighty power of God,
Which made the mountains rise,
Which spread the flowing seas abroad,
And built the lofty skies.

I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at his command,
And all the stars obey.

There's not a plant nor flower below,
But makes his glories known;
And storms arise, and tempests blow,
By order from his throne.

Creatures as numerous as they be,
Are subject to his care:
There's not a place where we can flee,
But God is present there.

His hand is my perpetual guard,
He keeps me with his eye;
Why should I then forget the Lord,
Who is for ever nigh?

QUESTIONS.

Where did Elijah go after the destruction
of the false prophets ?

What did he desire his servant to do ?

How many times ?

What lessons may we learn from this ?

Where did Elijah go from Mount Car-
mel ?

What was his request to God ?

Do you think it was a right or a wrong
request ?

Why ?

How was Elijah comforted in the wilder-
ness ?

Where did he afterwards go ?

How long was he there ?

How did God manifest his power to
Elijah on Horeb ?

Tell me the different ways in which God
speaks to us ?

Which is the only effectual way ?

What does God say to us when he thus
speaks ?

What shall our answer be ?

SCENES AT JORDAN & JERICHO.

THE history of the prophet Elijah is full of interesting and beautiful stories, dear children. But we shall not be able to go through them all; and therefore I will pass over several chapters, and talk to you to-day about the last event which we read of in his life. We have read of many holy men who have lived long, and who did much for the service of God during their lives, even to very old age, and were then taken by death to be with him for ever. So it was with Moses, and Aaron, and Joshua, and Samuel; but it was not so with Elijah. God does all things as he pleases; and though he generally acts according to certain rules with his creatures, yet now and then he does something quite different from





Elijah casting his mantle on Elisha.

his usual plan, just to show us that he is all-powerful, and that nothing is too hard, nor too wonderful for him to perform. Now so he acted with Elijah. God did not choose that he should die like other men ; but he determined to take him up by a whirlwind into heaven. Once before, God had taken a holy servant of his to heaven without dying. You know who that was—it was Enoch, of whom we read that he “walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.” (Gen. v. 24.)

Now, no doubt, God had revealed to Elijah what he was about to do. And when the time drew near for him to be taken up, the good prophet went once more to visit those places in which he had, during his life, been so useful, and where he had laboured so long. So he went with his servant Elisha from Gilgal to Bethel, and from Bethel to Jericho, and from Jericho to Jordan. There were schools for the sons of the prophets both at Bethel and at Jericho ; and perhaps Elijah visited them to talk to those young men for the

last time, and to give them instructions as to what they should do when he himself should be taken away; but the Bible does not tell us what it was that he said to them. Elisha went with his dear master on this journey. Elijah did not ask him to go. He said to him several times, "Tarry here, for the Lord hath sent me to Bethel, and to Jericho, and to Jordan." But Elisha's answer each time was, "I will not leave thee." So they went on together. Elisha was right. It is a great privilege to be with those who have more knowledge, more wisdom, more holiness, than we ourselves have; and when the time comes near for them to leave this world, we ought more than ever to prize them, and to listen to them, and to ask their advice, and their prayers, and their blessing.

So Elijah and Elisha came to Jordan. You remember this was the river which the Israelites passed through on dry ground when they entered the Promised Land; and God was pleased to perform another miracle on that river now, not for a whole nation,

but for his two chosen servants, Elijah and Elisha. "Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground." (2 Kings ii. 8.) The sons of the prophets were standing to view afar off; and, perhaps, God did this miracle in order to show honour to his prophet just before he took him away. God loves to honour his people. He says, "Them that honour me, I will honour." (1 Sam. ii. 30.)

And now Elijah's last moment on earth was almost come; and he wished to show his love and affection to his dear friend Elisha once more before they parted; so he said to him, "Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee." Now, suppose you were talking for the last time to some dear friend, and he should say this to you, what would you ask for? Would you ask for riches, or honours, or long life, or earthly happiness? No friend, however great he might be, could promise you the possession of all these. He might indeed,

give you wealth, and the means of becoming honourable and great in the world, but he could not give you the certainty of enjoying them ; for “ riches make to themselves wings, and fly away ;” and death might soon come, and take you away from them. Elijah, perhaps, might have been permitted to promise such things as these to Elisha, had he wished for them. But no, Elisha desired something better ; he wanted honour, indeed, but not the honour of this world. He wished for the honour which comes from God. His great desire was to be holy, and wise, and useful ; even more holy, and wise, and useful, than Elijah himself had been. So he answered, “ Let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me.” Was this a right wish ? Yes, I think it was. We can never desire more and greater *spiritual* blessings than God is willing to bestow ; and the blessings which Elisha desired *were* spiritual. But Elijah could not himself promise to bestow them ; they must come from God ; and he did not know whether God might be pleased to

make Elisha so great a prophet as he desired to be, though he would certainly make him a holy and a useful man ; so Elijah answered, “ Thou hast asked a hard thing ; nevertheless, if thou see me when I am taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee ; but if not, it shall not be so.” And so they went on, and talked, until the time came for Elijah to be taken away ; and then appeared “ a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder ; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”

None saw this but Elisha ; God allowed him to behold this wonderful sight ; and it was a proof to him that his request had been granted, and that a “ double portion ” of Elijah’s spirit indeed rested upon him. And thus Elijah left this world of sorrow and sin, and went in triumph to that bright world where there are no more tears, and where sorrow and sighing flee away for ever.

Do we ever read of Elijah again ? Yes ; we read something very remarkable con-

cerning him in the New Testament, in Matt. xvii., which gives us an account of what is called our Lord's Transfiguration, when he appeared to three of his disciples on Mount Tabor, not as he usually did when on earth, but so bright and glorious that they fell down on their faces, and "were sore afraid." And then we are told that Moses and Elijah appeared with Jesus in glory, and talked with him about his death, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. God greatly honoured these two faithful servants of his, first by giving them so much to do for him on earth, and then by permitting them to see and speak of the salvation which Christ came to accomplish by his death, and of the glory which should follow. Moses and Elijah, when on earth, had looked forward in faith to the coming of Christ; and even when in heaven they loved to think of that great work which he was to perform, in suffering and dying for sinners, and then in rising from the grave, and ascending into heaven to prepare a place for his redeemed people, that where he is there they may be also.

And now we must pass over to other stories in the history of Elisha. I shall not tell you all the events we read of in his life, but just two or three of them ; that you may be able to judge for yourselves how far his request to Elijah was granted —“ Let a double portion of thy spirit rest upon me.” After he had watched his dear master going up to heaven in the chariot of fire, till he could see him no more, he returned to the river Jordan, and took Elijah’s mantle, which had fallen from him, and smote the waters, and said, “ Where is the Lord God of Elijah ? ” and the waters again divided, and Elisha went through on dry ground. The sons of the prophets saw this ; and they were at once convinced, by the miracle, that Elisha was chosen by God to be a prophet instead of Elijah, and said, “ The spirit of Elijah doth rest upon Elisha.”

Then he came to Jericho. You remember the destruction of that city in the days of Joshua, and the curse which was pronounced on him who should rebuild it, and how it

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was, notwithstanding, rebuilt, and in what manner that curse was verified. Jericho was now again a pleasant city, and full of people, but the water was bad, and the ground barren. Some of the inhabitants came to Elisha, and told him this. Then he said, "Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein." And he went to the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and the waters were healed. This was another miracle, to show the people that Elisha was indeed a prophet of the Lord. Then he came to Bethel. Here he was mocked by some children, who came out, and said to him, "Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." And then, again, Elisha showed his power, and the authority given to him by God; for he cursed those wicked children in the name of the Lord; "and there came two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." This must have convinced the people, in a very awful manner, that God had sent Elisha not only to work miracles of mercy, but, also, to punish sin by dreadful judgments.

From Bethel Elisha went to Carmel, and then he returned to Samaria, where he usually lived. This was the capital city of the kingdom of Israel, or the ten tribes.

I shall have more to tell you about Elisha another time, but we will end here to-day with one or two lessons which you should learn from this part of the story. Is there anything in the conduct of Elisha which you should try to imitate? I think there is. First, there is his love and reverence for his master; his obedience to him, his affection for him to the very last, and the attention he paid to all his words and instructions. Be like Elisha, then, in love and respect to your parents, and teachers, and ministers; and especially try to remember what they say to you, when they teach you, as Elijah taught Elisha, the holy word and commands of God. And then, there is another thing in which you should be like Elisha—in *holy ambition*. But I must explain to you what I mean by this. Last time, you remember, I spoke to you about holy boldness; and I told

you that there are some kinds of boldness which are not holy, but sinful. And we talked about firmness and decision, too, in *good* things being right; and about determination and obstinacy in *bad* things being wrong. Now, so it is with ambition; there is a right kind of ambition, and there is a wrong kind; and you must learn to distinguish between the two.

But what is ambition? It generally means a desire to excel: a love of glory; a wish to become greater, in some way, than we now are. This feeling, when it is directed to wrong things, or acted upon in a wrong way, is wicked and dangerous. Ambition has led people to commit dreadful crimes, in order that they might obtain some honour which they could not get in any other way—some vain worldly honour, of no real value after all. And then, there are some things good in themselves, and which it is right to desire to a certain degree, but which become dangerous if we desire them too much, and strive after them too earnestly. Human learning, and wis-

dom, and skill, for instance, are good things in themselves, and we should desire and seek them ; but if we desire and value them more than holy and heavenly things, then they do us harm, and we are wrong in giving them so much of our time, and of our affections, and of our attention. It is right for you, dear children, to desire the praise of your teachers, and to wish to gain rewards for your diligence and improvement in your studies ; but if this wish is so strong that it takes away your minds from still better and more important things, then it becomes wrong.

In all these cases, ambition—desire of praise, wish for honour and glory—is sinful, because it is either directed to wrong things or carried out in a wrong spirit.

But now, what did I mean by a *holy* ambition ? I meant a desire to become greater in heavenly things : a desire to be more and more holy ; more and more useful ; more and more active in God's service. This was Elisha's great wish when he said, “Let a double portion of thy spirit rest

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upon me." Holy and useful as Elijah was, Elisha wished to be still more so; not that he might obtain praise of men, but that he might glorify God during his life, and then be taken to dwell with him for ever in heaven. And though *we* are not called to be prophets, and to do those wonderful works which Elijah and Elisha were appointed to do, yet we ought all to have something of the spirit which was so strong in them. We should not be contented with the things of this world, even if we might have all its honours, and glories, and riches; for they cannot satisfy the soul. But we should seek things above—holiness, salvation, and, at last, "a crown of glory which fadeth not away."

But do not suppose, dear children, from anything I have said, that however holy, or active, or useful any persons may be, they can gain heaven by all this. No; Elisha never thought so; nor any of the holy men of whom we read in the Bible. They all knew that they were sinners, and that whatever good thing they did, they

did not of themselves, but through the grace and power given them by God. This was what St. Paul felt when he said, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ; the righteousness which is of God by faith. Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 8, 9, 13, 14.)

HYMN.

Behold the throne of grace !
The promise calls me near :
There Jesus shows a smiling face,
And waits to answer prayer.

My soul, ask what thou wilt ;
Thou canst not be too bold ;
Since his own blood for thee he spilt,
What else will he withhold ?

Thine image, Lord, bestow,
Thy presence, and thy love ;
I ask to serve thee here below,
And reign with thee above.

Teach me to live by faith,
Conform my will to thine ;
Let me victorious be in death,
And then in glory shine.

QUESTIONS.

What was Elijah's last journey ?

Who accompanied him ?

How did they go through the river Jordan ?

What did Elijah say to Elisha just before they parted ?

What was Elisha's answer ?

In what way was Elijah taken to heaven ?

Do we read anything further of him in the Bible ?

What were the first miracles which God gave Elisha power to perform ?

Tell me two things which we may learn from this part of Elisha's history ?

Is it right for us to desire great things ?

If so, what kind of things ?

What was the great desire expressed by St. Paul ?

THE LAND OF SYRIA.

IN our story to-day I must refer you to another part of the map. North of Canaan you will find a country called Syria. The capital was Damascus, a city of which we read frequently in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament. The king and people of Syria were often at war with Israel; and in one of their battles they took away among their captives a little Israelitish maid, and brought her to the land of Syria.

The captain of the Syrian army was called Naaman. He was a great man in his own country, and with his king; he was very rich, very powerful, and very much honoured by his master. It so happened that this little girl was brought to

his house, and she waited upon Naaman's wife. Now, I must tell you that there was one thing which made Naaman unhappy, and spoiled all his enjoyments ; so that he was miserable, notwithstanding his riches and honours—he was a leper.

You have often heard of lepers in the Bible. In the New Testament, we read of several whom Jesus himself cured by his touch, or by his word. And this showed his almighty power, for the leprosy was a disease which no human skill could cure ; no physician, no medicine, could take it away.

Perhaps, before we go on with Naaman's story, it may be well for me to tell you a little more about this dreadful disease, and about the laws which God himself made respecting it.

The leprosy was a disease which covered the body with sores. It made the person who had it unclean, according to the Jewish law ; so that he was obliged to live apart by himself, and was not allowed to come into the congregation of God's people, nor

to appear in God's house. It was the office of the priests to examine the leper, and to pronounce him unclean ; and when the leprosy was cured, to pronounce him clean. And God gave a great many rules for the cleansing of the leper, which you will find in Leviticus xiv. Sacrifices were to be offered for him, and blood was to be sprinkled upon him, and oil was to be put upon him ; and then he was declared clean.

Now Naaman the Syrian knew nothing of all these laws respecting leprosy, which the people of Israel observed ; nor did he know that God was often pleased to remove this dreadful disease by his own power, through his servants the prophets. But the little maid knew all about these things, for she had been brought up in the land of Canaan, and had been most likely well instructed in the law of God. And now that she was far from her own home and country, and among strangers and idolaters, she did not forget what she had heard and seen, and she wished to make her knowledge

useful to others. So one day, when she was waiting upon her mistress, she said, “Would God, that my master were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy.” (2 Kings v. 3.) This was soon told to Naaman; he was pleased to hear of any way in which his leprosy might be cured; and the king of Syria was glad too, and wrote a letter to the king of Israel, and sent Naaman with it to Samaria. This letter was to ask the king of Israel to cure Naaman; but *he* was not able to do anything for him, and he wondered very much what the letter meant; and rent his clothes, and said, “Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?”

But when Elisha heard of all this, he sent for Naaman to come to him, that he might know there was a prophet in Israel. So Naaman went, with his chariots, and horses, and servants, and stood before the door of Elisha’s house.

Now, Naaman thought that, as he was

such a great man, Elisha would shew him honour, and would come out to him, and “ stand, and call upon the name of his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.” But Elisha did nothing of the kind ; he only sent a servant to Naaman with this message, “ Go and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be clean.” This made Naaman angry. He thought this was a strange way to be cured ; and it was not a way which he liked, because there was something humbling to his pride in the thought of washing in Jordan—in a river of Israel which he despised. He thought there were better rivers in his own country, in which he might wash, if washing could cure him. He would far rather have been cured by doing some very difficult thing, than in this simple easy way. “ So he turned, and went away in a rage.”

This showed a great deal of foolish pride in Naaman ; and as long as that pride remained, it was quite impossible for him to be cured. There was nothing, indeed,

in the water of Jordan itself, that could heal him. Any other river, or any other means, or no means at all, would have done as much as Jordan, had God so pleased. But Naaman was to learn faith in God's word, and obedience to God's command ; and until he had learnt that, there was no cure for him. Now, happily for Naaman, though he was so proud at first, yet when his passion was over, he was willing to listen, and to take advice even from his own servants. They came to him, and said, " My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it ? How much rather, then, when he saith unto thee, ' Wash, and be clean ! ' "

Then he went, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, and he was made clean. How glad Naaman was, then, that he had been led at last to obey God's command ! He was full of gratitude—gratitude to Elisha, and to the God of Elisha also ; and he went back to the prophet's house, to say how thankful he was, and to offer a reward.

But Elisha would take nothing from Naaman. All the acts of kindness and mercy which God enabled him to do, he did not for his own benefit, nor for his own honour, but only for the good of others, and for the glory of God. Let us learn from Elisha a lesson of unselfish kindness, or, as we usually call it, *disinterestedness*; and from Naaman a lesson of gratitude. And so Naaman was cured of his leprosy. That was a great mercy, but he received another greater still. He had learned the power of the God of Israel, and had determined, by God's help, no more to worship idols, but to serve the Lord alone. So Naaman returned home to Syria, cured in body and in soul too.

Now, I shall leave you to read the rest of this chapter for yourselves; and finish the story by telling you some important lessons to be learned from it. And first, let us go back to the little maid. You have not forgotten her, I hope, for she had been the means of bringing all these mercies upon Naaman.

What joy this must have been to her—more than enough to make her willing to be a servant and a captive in a foreign land! Well, now, does not she show us how useful even the meanest and the youngest may be? They may, like this little maid, be the means of bringing those older and greater than themselves to the enjoyment of better blessings than the cure of a bodily disease. They may help to lend the Gospel to heathens in foreign lands, to tell them of a prophet greater than Elisha—the Lord Jesus Christ himself, who can forgive all their iniquities, and heal all their diseases; worse diseases than that of leprosy. And then, see what a blessing it is to have a religious education—to be early taught the truths of God's word, and the way of salvation. This little girl would not have been so useful to Naaman if she had not herself known something of the true God, of his power and his mercy, and of what he had done by the prophet Elisha. She must have attended, too, to what she was taught, or she would

not have understood and remembered it so well. Perhaps she had herself seen Elisha, and listened to his words, and received his instructions. Dear children, if you wish to bring them to Jesus, the great Prophet and Teacher of his people, you must first learn of him yourselves. He is willing to instruct you; and we are all commanded to go and learn of him. "Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you; and whosoever will not hear that prophet shall be destroyed from among the people." (Acts iii. 22, 23.) Come to him in faith, attend to his teaching, and then try to bring others to him also.

But there is something for us to learn from Naaman, as well as from the little maid. He was a leper. Now leprosy is, in the Bible, considered as a type of a disease which we all suffer from in our souls. I mean sin. I told you that people who had the leprosy were accounted unclean, and were not allowed to come into the tabernacle or temple of God. And so, those who have the guilt of sin upon them,

uncleansed, untaken away, are far from God, far from his favour and from his blessing ; and if they die in that state, they must be far from heaven and happiness for ever.

But how was Naaman cured ? Not in his own way, but in God's way ; and that way was very easy and simple—only to “wash and be clean.” And so, dear children, we can be cleansed and cured of sin only in one way which God himself has appointed. There is no way we can find out to cure ourselves. Our own goodness, our own works, our own righteousness, will never do. We must be penitent and humble, and believing, and just do what God tells us to do in his word : and then we shall be cured, and not till then. And what is it that God tells us to do ? Of what may the river Jordan, which cleansed Naaman, remind us ? I think it may remind us of the “fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” (Zech. xiii. 1.) Our souls must be washed in that, and they will be made clean. You know what

is meant by this fountain : it is “the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin.” (1 John i. 7.)

HYMN.

Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee ;
Let the water and the blood,
From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure ;
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Not the labour of my hands
Can fulfil thy law’s demands ;
Could my zeal no respite know,
Could my tears for ever flow,
All for sin could not atone ;
Thou must save, and thou alone.

Nothing in my hand I bring ;
Simply to thy cross I cling ;
Naked, come to thee for dress ;
Helpless, look to thee for grace ;
Vile, I to the fountain fly ;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.

While I draw this fleeting breath,
When my eyelids close in death ;
When I rise to worlds unknown—
See thee on thy judgment throne—
Rock of Ages cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in thee.

QUESTIONS.

Where was Syria, and what was its chief city?

Who was Naaman?

How was he afflicted?

In what part of the Bible may we read the laws concerning leprosy?

How did Naaman first hear of Elisha the prophet?

What did Elisha desire Naaman to do in order that he might be cured of his leprosy?

Why did this displease Naaman?

Did he attend to Elisha's directions afterwards?

What lesson may we learn from the little maid?

Of what should Naaman's disease and cure remind us?

Repeat a text which tells us how sin may be cleansed.

DANGER FROM ASSYRIA.

I TOLD you that I should only mention a few of the many interesting stories in Elisha's history ; and so we will pass on to-day to other persons and other things. Only I must advise you to read for yourselves those chapters which tell us more about him, in 2 Kings iii.—ix. ; and, again, the account of his death, in chapter xiii. I think you will see from his history, that his request was granted, and that a double portion of Elijah's spirit did indeed rest upon him. Elijah was a very great prophet, and did a great work in Israel, and was much honoured by God, both by being taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, and afterwards in being permitted to see the glory of Christ at his transfiguration ; but Elisha worked



Destruction of Sennacherib.



a greater number of miracles than Elijah did.

Now Elijah and Elisha were prophets in *Israel*; they were chiefly connected with the kingdom of the ten tribes, the capital of which was, as you know, Samaria. But you have not forgotten, I hope, that there was another kingdom in Canaan—that of *Judah*, of which the capital was Jerusalem. There were many prophets who lived and taught there; I am going to-day to tell you of one of them. If you look through those books in the Bible which we call the Prophets, you will find that the first of them is called *Isaiah*, because it was written by a person of that name. The first verse of *Isaiah* tells us where he prophesied, and in whose reign—"In *Judah* and *Jerusalem*, in the days of *Uzziah*, *Jotham*, *Ahaz*, and *Hezekiah*, kings of *Judah*." Three of these kings were good men, who honoured and loved *Isaiah*. *Ahaz* was a wicked king; but *Isaiah* was sent to prophesy and talk to him, just as *Elijah* and *Elisha* were sent to warn and instruct the wicked kings of *Israel*.

It was to Ahaz that one of the most remarkable prophecies of Isaiah was spoken, which predicted the birth of Christ, by the name of Immanuel, God with us.

But it is in Hezekiah's reign that we find most about Isaiah. Hezekiah was one of the best kings of Judah; and we have a great deal of his history given to us in the second books of Kings and Chronicles, and also in the prophet Isaiah. It will be a nice plan for you to find out and read the chapters which tell us about him in these different books. This is the way in which we should always read Bible history. If the same stories are related in several parts of Scripture we should read the account given in *each*; and so we shall get much clearer knowledge about them than if we read only *one* account. This is particularly necessary in studying the history of the Kings and Chronicles.

And now, what have we to say about Hezekiah, and Isaiah the prophet? Hezekiah reigned after Ahaz, who had been an idolater, and had paid no attention to the

worship of the true God, but had even shut up the beautiful temple which Solomon had built for his service. So the first thing Hezekiah did was to open the house of God again, and to cleanse it, and to assemble the priests and Levites to offer sacrifices there, and to praise and glorify God. And then Hezekiah invited all the people of his land to come and celebrate the passover, and to make a solemn covenant with God.

The people of Judah, as well as king Ahaz, had offended God and made him angry with their idolatries. And now, Hezekiah exhorted them to turn to God with all their hearts, and to seek him in the way he had appointed. So they all came together to keep the feast of the Passover. Do you remember what this feast was? It was appointed by God himself, in remembrance of that night in Egypt in which the angel passed over the doors sprinkled with blood, when he slew all the first-born of the Egyptians. God commanded that this event should be remembered every year; and that, on a cer-

tain day, all the families of Israel should slay and eat a lamb, as their forefathers had done on the night when they came out of Egypt. The feast of the Passover was typical of "Christ our Passover," who was "sacrificed for us" on the cross, and whose blood, sprinkled on the heart, can save sinners from everlasting destruction.

But this feast was very often forgotten by the kings and the people; and years had now passed away without any notice being taken of it. But when Hezekiah began to reign, he determined to rule his people according to the law of God. So the Passover was kept, not only by the people of Judah, but by many of those, also, who belonged to the other tribes; and it was a time of very great joy and of blessing from God; for "their voice was heard; and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven." (2 Chron. xxx. 27.) Hezekiah was also very attentive to all the other commands of God's law—to the different sacrifices, and to the sacred services, and to the tithes for

the Levites; “and in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.” Do you not think that Judah must have been in a very happy state during the reign of this good king?

In the reign of Hezekiah, an invasion was made upon Judah by Sennacherib, king of Assyria, who came with an army to make war against the people of Judah. Where was Assyria? You must not think that this is the same country as Syria, of which we have read before. Assyria was a large country to the east of Syria, north of the Persian Gulf, and south of the Caspian Sea. You will easily find it in the map. And then look for two large rivers which flowed through it—the Tigris and the Euphrates. Two famous cities once flourished in Assyria; the city of Nineveh on the Tigris, and the city of Babylon on the Euphrates. Of this last city I shall have more to tell you another time. King Sennacherib lived at Nineveh; but soon

after his reign, Nineveh was destroyed, and Babylon became the chief city in that large country, which was then called the kingdom of Babylon.

The Assyrians and Sennacherib were all idolaters; one of their idols was called Nisroch. Sennacherib was a great and powerful king; he had made war upon a great many other countries, and taken possession of them; and another king of Assyria, of whom I shall tell you in our next lesson, had taken the people of Israel captives; perhaps Sennacherib expected to do the same with the people of Judah. So he sent his captain, who was named Rabshakeh, with an army, and a threatening letter to king Hezekiah, while he himself was fighting against some places not very far off from Jerusalem.

It was sad news for Hezekiah when he opened Sennacherib's letter, and read what that wicked king intended to do, and saw the great Assyrian army, and Rabshakeh coming against the city. What could be done? Hezekiah was a wise as well as a

good king. He knew how to act in this time of danger, and he began to act directly. He did all he could to keep off the enemies, and to resist and conquer them if they should come any nearer. He stopped up the rivers and streams which were outside Jerusalem, that there might be no water for the army of Sennacherib. Then he built up the wall which was broken down, and prepared arms for his soldiers to fight with, in great abundance. And when he had made all these preparations, he called together his captains of war, and spake comfortably to them, saying, "Be strong and courageous; be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for the multitude that is with him; for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight our battles." (2 Chron. xxxii. 7, 8.)

Now, all this was very right. It showed in Hezekiah much wisdom in using the means proper for his defence; and much faith in trusting not in those means them-

selves, but in God, who alone could make them of any use. But still, this was not all that Hezekiah did. He wanted advice and comfort for himself, while he gave comfort to his people; so he sent to the prophet Isaiah, and asked him to pray to God for help and deliverance. And Hezekiah prayed too, for himself. He took the letter which Sennacherib had sent him, and went into the house of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord; and Hezekiah prayed unto the Lord, saying, "O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubim; thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. Incline thine ear, O Lord, and hear; open thine eyes, O Lord, and see; and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which he hath sent to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were no gods, but the work of mens' hands, wood and stone; therefore, they have destroyed them. Now, therefore, O

Lord, our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord, even thou only.”
(Isa. xxxvii. 14—20.)

And do you think that all Hezekiah’s faith and prayers were in vain? No; that God who had so often defended his people in times past, was ready to help them now; and he sent to Hezekiah a message of comfort and encouragement by Isaiah. “Thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria: he shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for my own sake, and for my servant David’s sake.” Hezekiah believed the promise of God, and no more feared Sennacherib, and Rabshakeh, and their great army. And, indeed, he had no need to fear them; for, that very night, “the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians, an hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.” So Hezekiah and his people found that it is

indeed better to trust in God than in an arm of flesh ; and that more were with them than with the proud army of the Assyrians.

And now I want you to learn an important lesson from this story. Try to remember what I am about to say to you ; and if you cannot quite understand it at first, I will explain my meaning afterwards. The lesson I wish to impress upon you is this :—the necessity of uniting exertion and prayer in cases of difficulty ; and the duty of *using* means, without *trusting* in them. Now, I dare say, you think this a long sentence, full of hard words, and very difficult to recollect ; but I hope I shall be able to make you understand what the lesson means. Suppose we are in difficulty or danger of any kind, what must we do ? How ought we to act ? I will tell you. We must exert ourselves ; we must do all we can, just as if the power were in ourselves ; and we must pray ; and then we must leave the matter to God, remembering that, after all, *we* have no power,

and that we must therefore trust to *his* wisdom and *his* goodness. If, for example, you were very ill, your kind parents would send for the doctor, and he would use all his skill for your recovery ; and your friends would pay great attention to his directions, and carefully give you whatever he advised. And this would be acting quite rightly ; for these are means God himself has appointed, and which he is often pleased to bless. But would it be right to trust to these means, and to think that there was power in them to cure you, and that there was no need to ask God's help and blessing at all ? No ; the physician and the medicine would only be means—instruments in God's hands, of no use in themselves, but of great use if blessed by him. And so your pious parents or friends would pray for a blessing, and then leave your recovery to God.

Now, do you understand what is meant by uniting exertion and prayer—using the means, and trusting only in God ? This was just what Hezekiah did. He built walls, and prepared armour, and assembled

soldiers to oppose Sennacherib ; those were the *means*. He spread the threatening letter of that wicked king before God in the temple ; that was *prayer*. And then he patiently waited the fulfilment of the promise sent to him by Isaiah ; that was *trust* in God. And so, in all the difficulties which God's people meet with in their way to heaven, there must be exertion, and striving, and diligence, and prayer. This is what the Bible tells them. It says, "Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life." (1 Tim. vi. 12.) "Work out your own salvation." (Phil. ii. 12.) God's people are to strive to do this just as earnestly and diligently as if the power were in themselves.

But then, if you look on a little further you will see *how* it is that the victory is gained, and that eternal life is obtained, and that salvation is worked out. And with these texts we will end our lesson : — "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 57.) "The gift of God is eter-

nal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. vi. 23.) "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 13.)

HYMN.

Unbelief the soul dismays;
What objections will it raise!
But true faith securely leans
On the promise in the means.

If to faith it once be known
God has said, "It shall be done,
And in the appointed way;"
Faith has them no more to say.

Thus the Lord is pleased to try
Those who on his help rely;
By the means he makes it known
That the power is all his own.

Yet the means are not in vain,
If the end we would attain;
Though the breath of prayer be weak,
None shall find but those who seek.

God alone the heart can reach,
Yet the ministers must preach;
'Tis their part the seed to sow,
And 'tis his to make it grow.

QUESTIONS.

What great prophet lived in the reign of Hezekiah ?

Tell me some events in this reign.

What feast was kept at this time ?

Who came against Judah ?

How did Hezekiah act ?

In what way were the Assyrians destroyed ?

What lesson may we learn from Hezekiah's conduct ?

How does the Bible tell us to act in all our dangers and difficulties ?

A COVENANT MADE IN JUDAH.

THERE are several more very interesting events in the history of Hezekiah ; but, as it would make this little book too large to put them all in, I must leave you to read them alone.

There are two circumstances which you should attend to particularly in these chapters—the illness of Hezekiah, and the visit he received from the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. Hezekiah lived fifteen years after this illness ; and when he died, his son Manasseh became king of Judah. He was then a little boy of twelve years old ; he grew up a very wicked man, and a worshipper of idols ; and Jerusalem was soon again in as sad a state as it had been in when Ahaz reigned. God punished

Manasseh by suffering him to be taken captive into Babylon, and put in prison there. And yet God intended this in mercy to the son of his faithful servant Hezekiah ; for Manasseh, when he was in affliction, besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him. And he was entreated of him, and he heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem, into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.)

And now we must leave Judah and Jerusalem for a moment, and go again to Israel and Samaria. What was their state at this time ? I told you that all the kings of Israel were wicked. We read of one after another, that "he did evil in the sight of the Lord." At last, God's patience was worn out; and, as the king and people of Israel would not attend to his warnings and threatenings by the prophets whom he sent, he spoke to them in another way—in the way of judgment, as I explained to you

in one of our last lessons. And what were these judgments? The king of Assyria came, and took them away captives into his own land. The name of this king was Shalmaneser; he reigned before Sennacherib, who, you remember, invaded Judah in the time of Hezekiah. It was in Hezekiah's reign that the ten tribes were carried captive into Assyria. And what became of Samaria, and the other cities of Israel? Were they left desolate, without any people in them? No; the king of Assyria put into Samaria many of his own people, from Babylon and Nineveh. These people were idolaters; and, though afterwards they learned something of the worship of the true God, yet they continued to serve their idols too. The descendants of these people were called Samaritans; and they afterwards became enemies to the Jews, as we shall see by-and-by.

And so, of the two kingdoms, only one remained now—that of Judah. And the people of this kingdom, instead of taking warning by what had happened to the ten

tribes, followed their example, and worshipped idols, as they did, and would not attend to God, and to the words of his prophets.

But were there no good kings of Judah after Hezekiah? Yes; there was one, about whom I am now going to tell you. His name was Josiah. When he first became king, he was a little child, only eight years old; and yet, even then, we are told that he began to seek after God. Like Samuel, he early learnt to serve the Lord; and he continued to do so all his life long. Some of the acts of his reign will remind you of those of Hezekiah. The temple was in the same state as when Ahaz was king; and so Josiah, like Hezekiah, set about cleansing and repairing it. And he put away the idols, and the idolatrous priests, and exhorted the people to serve the true God only. This, then, is the first lesson we are to learn from Josiah—zeal for God's service and honour, hatred of sin, and love of holiness. And, remember, that when Josiah did all this, he was very young,

and he had many temptations to turn away from God, and to love the things of this world, its riches, and honours, and pleasures. Now, how was it, do you think, that he learned to do right? I will tell you. Josiah read and attended to God's word, and prayed to be enabled to act according to it. This is the way for young people, and for all people, to know how to act rightly. David said, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word." (Psa. cxix. 9.)

We are told, in the history of Josiah, how much he honoured the law of God. When the temple was cleansed, the priest found in it "a book of the law of the Lord," given by Moses; and he brought it out, and read it to the king. Josiah had read and studied God's law long before this time; but it seems he had never seen this particular book before. It is called "the Book of the Covenant." When Josiah heard it, he rent his clothes, and called some of his servants, and said to them,

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“ Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found ; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do after all that is written in this book.” (2 Chron. xxxiv. 21.)

There was a prophetess named Huldah living in Jerusalem at that time : so the king’s messengers went to her, and asked her how the king and the country could escape from God’s anger. Then Huldah gave them this message from God :—“ I will bring evil upon this place, even all the curses that are written in the book ; but, as for the king of Judah, say unto him, ‘ Thus saith the Lord : Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou hearest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace : neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon

this place.' " This message was brought to the king ; and then he and all the people went to the temple : and he read to them the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. And after that they made a covenant to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments ; and he caused all that were present to stand to it. And afterwards they kept a solemn passover, as in the days of king Hezekiah.

Now, there is much for you to learn from all this, dear children. And first, as to God's word. Do you love to read it, as young Josiah did ? And do you attend to it like him ? You have much more of that word than Josiah had ; more of history, and more of prophecy ; and then you have the gospel too ; the words and acts of Christ, and the letters of his apostles ; and all the instruction they contain. Josiah had none of these. How thankful you should be, then, for all the light and knowledge God has given *you!* Read God's word, then ; and never forget, when you do so, to pray for the Holy Spirit to help you to under-

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stand it, and to profit by it. It will do you no good if you know it only in your memory and understanding, and do not feel its power in your hearts, nor act according to its commands in your lives. And it is the Holy Spirit alone that can enable you to do this.

And then, I have another lesson for you. You remember that Josiah and the people made a covenant. We often read in the Bible of covenants: do you quite understand the meaning of the word? I will try to explain it to you. A covenant is a solemn agreement made between two persons, or between two parties, in which each makes certain engagements or promises to the other. I will give you an example of this, to help you to understand it better. In Genesis xxxi., we read of a covenant that was made between Jacob and his uncle Laban. There had been a dispute between them: and by this covenant they were made friends. Each promised something to the other. Laban promised never to injure Jacob: and Jacob promised never to injure

Laban. And they said that God should be witness between them : and Jacob set up a pillar, and made a heap of stones for a memorial, in the place where the agreement was made. And then they offered a sacrifice, which was always done when covenants were made ; and it was considered a very sacred and solemn matter.

This, you see, was a covenant made between two men. But we often read of covenants made between God and man ; and in these God was sometimes pleased to make promises to his people, without requiring any promise from them in return. So it was when God made a covenant with Noah, and promised never to destroy the world again by a flood of water. And so it was when God made a covenant with Abraham, and promised to multiply his children, and to give them the land of Canaan for a possession. And then, again, we read of other covenants, in which God promised certain blessings to his people upon certain conditions : that is, he said he would bless the people *if* they did particu-

lar things, and acted in a particular way. So it was when the people of Israel made covenants with God in the times of Moses and of Joshua ; and afterwards God said he would take care of them and do them good, if they loved and served him. That was the condition, and they promised to observe it. But you remember how often they forgot their promises, and fell into idolatry ; and then God no longer blessed them, but gave them up into the hands of their enemies.

And now, if you understand what is meant by a covenant, we will go back to Josiah, and to the covenant which he and the people of Judah made at this time. What was it that they promised ? To walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments. And God was present with them then, and ready to bless them if they would be faithful to those promises. And during the reign of Josiah they did continue faithful ; and therefore, though trouble and sorrow were soon coming upon Judah, as the punishment of their sins, yet, as God

had said by Huldah, no evil came while Josiah lived; and he died beloved and honoured by all his people.

I hope, dear children, that you will strive to follow the example of young Josiah; pray that you may early be, as he was, decided in the service of God; and may you all be enabled to say with your hearts, as well as with your lips, "Come, and let us join ourselves unto the Lord, in a perpetual covenant which shall not be forgotten."

(Jer. I. 5.)

HYMN.

Come, let us seek the grace of God,
And all, with one accord,
In a perpetual covenant join
Ourselves to Christ the Lord.

Come, let us join ourselves to him
Who died our souls to save;
Who died that sinners, such as we,
Eternal life might have.

And may we ever, through his grace,
This covenant bear in mind;
No more forsake the Lord our God,
Nor cast his words behind.

Oh, let the days already past
Suffice to have spent in vain;
Let Satan's power no more prevail,
Nor in our members reign.

Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
May we by faith receive,
And henceforth die to all below,
And to thee only live.

QUESTIONS.

What happened to the ten tribes of Israel during Hezekiah's reign?

How did Josiah show his reverence for God's word?

What prophetess lived in Jerusalem then, and what was her message to Josiah?

What was the covenant made by the king and people?

Repeat a text which speaks of entering into a covenant with God.

THE CITY OF BABYLON.

I AM going to take you a long way off to-day, dear children—to a very large and fine city many miles from Jerusalem. This city was called Babylon; and, as I told you before, it was situated in the land of Assyria. It was surrounded by great walls, very thick, and very high. It had a hundred gates, and these gates were made of brass. Inside the gates, within the city, were houses, and gardens, and palaces, and temples, all very beautiful and magnificent, which had been built by the different sovereigns who had reigned in Babylon. Through the city flowed a noble river; you ought to remember its name, for I have mentioned it more than once before—it was called the Euphrates. Babylon was

divided into two parts by this river ; so, in some places, there were bridges, by which to pass over from one part to the other ; and there were flights of steps leading from the river to gates which opened into the different squares and streets of the city.

Babylon was a very large place ; it measured about sixty miles in the extent of its walls. It was square ; so each side was about fifteen miles long. And what sort of people lived there ? They were very rich, very great, and very powerful ; they had all kinds of fine things brought from other parts of the world, to beautify their city ; and it was called “the glory of kingdoms ; the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency.” (Isa. xiii. 19.) And yet, notwithstanding their greatness, the people of Babylon were not a happy people. Why not ? If you had walked through their fine city, and gone into thcir temples, I think you would have been able to tell why. You would have found out that God was not worshipped there. You would have seen idols of gold, and silver, and brass,

and wood, and stone ; but no holy temple—no altars raised for the true God—no sacrifices offered to him ; and, therefore, there was no blessing upon Babylon—so how could the people be happy ?

And now you may fancy yourselves, many long years ago, wandering about this great city, and admiring its beauty, and mourning over its idolatry. At last you come to a large building, strongly barred, and guarded on all sides ; it is the great prison-house of Babylon. Will you ask the guards to open those great gates, and to let you in ? Many poor captives are there ; but there is one whom you will pity, perhaps, more than all the others. There he sits, bound in fotters of brass, in his lonely prison. Look at him ; he cannot see you. He rolls his eyes around, and sometimes he seems to shudder with horror, as though some dreadful sight were before him ; but no, he sees nothing—he is quite, quite blind. Who is he, and how came he here ? I will tell you. That poor captive was once a king reigning over God's chosen people in Jeru-

salem, in the very same city in which David, and Solomon, and Hezekiah, and Josiah reigned. His name was Zedekiah; and if he had loved and served God, as those good kings had done, he might have lived happily, and died peacefully, as they did. But no; Zedekiah did not worship God, nor read his word, nor honour his commands, nor keep his covenant. We are told that "he stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart from turning to the Lord God of Israel." (2 Chron. xxxvi. 13.) And when the good prophet Jeremiah warned him, and advised him, he would not repent, he would not receive instruction. And so God sent upon him, and upon his people, all those evils which he would not suffer to come in the time of Josiah.

Nebuchadnezzar, the great king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem, and besieged the city, and broke down the walls, and destroyed the temple; and took the king, and his princes, and his nobles, and his treasures, all away to Babylon. Many of the people of Judah he killed with

the sword, and others he carried captive, and made them servants to himself and to his sons. And he “ slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out Zedekiah’s eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.” (Jer. xxxix. 6, 7.) The last sight Zedekiah saw was the dreadful death of his poor children ; and then his own eyes were put out, that he might see no pleasant sight again for ever !

Was Jerusalem left quite desolate, without any inhabitants at all ? No ; a few still remained ; and Nebuchadnezzar appointed a governor over them. But they did not stay long in Judah. Notwithstanding all their sufferings, the people of Judah were still rebellious, their hearts were still hard. God’s judgments had not softened them ; for, as I told you before, unless the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart with the “ still small voice,” no other way of speaking will have any effect, whether God speaks by his providence, or his word, or his judgments. So these rebellious people, instead of submitting, and remaining in

their own land, determined to go into Egypt, against God's command by Jeremiah; there many of them perished, and many more were scattered and carried away into distant lands.

But you must not suppose, dear children, that *all* the captives taken to Babylon from Judah were wicked and rebellious. That was indeed the sad character of many of them, particularly of the great men—of the king, and the princes, and the priests. God, in his righteous governance, often punishes a nation, as a nation, for the iniquity of those who rule; and blesses a nation, as a nation, for the piety of those who rule. Do you understand me? God is the great Governor of the world. He rules over all nations, large and small; and the people who belong to those nations, high and low, rich and poor, old and young—all are his subjects, and he notices the conduct of every one of them. Nothing escapes his eye. And God acts like a king in punishing those who transgress his laws, and in blessing those who obey them, and who

serve him faithfully. Now, these punishments and blessings are of different kinds. He has punishments and blessings to bestow upon every single person belonging to those nations. And when God sends judgments upon a whole nation, it is often on account of the wickedness of those who govern ; and when God sends blessings upon a whole nation, it is often on account of the piety of those who govern ; for, you know, the rulers are the heads of the nation ; they act for the people, and they represent the people. Now, it will be well for you to try to remember all this, because there is an important lesson here, which even little children like you are not too young to learn.

You see what a solemn thing it is to be a king, or a queen, or a ruler ; or to have anything to do with making the laws and governing the people of a great nation. God is looking on all the time, and watching over those who govern, as he did over the rulers of Judah ; and he is ready to bestow blessings, as he did when Hezekiah

and Josiah called their people to enter into covenant with God ; and to send judgments, as he did when Zedekiah hardened his heart, and when the princes and the people together forsook the covenant of their God. So then, how needful it is for those who rule, to pray for wisdom, as Solomon did, when he asked for an understanding heart. And is there no duty for the people too ? Yes ; and this is what I wish you to understand, and to remember particularly, for it concerns you as well as older people. It is the duty of all to pray for their sovereigns and their rulers, and to entreat God to make them truly wise, that they may govern their people in the right way. The Bible teaches us this. St. Paul says, “ I exhort that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.” (1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.)

But we have almost forgotten Babylon.
I was telling you that some of the captives

were really holy men, and therefore, though they shared in the judgments inflicted on Judah, because they belonged to the nation, yet they shared in God's mercy and favour also, because they belonged to his people. This is another thing for you to remember, dear children. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." (2 Tim. ii. 19.) If there were only very few in a whole country who loved and served him, he would know who those few were, and not one of them, however poor or small, would be without his blessing. *We* cannot tell who really love God. If it were left to us to find out and to count up all the people in a single city, or even street, who belong to God, we should make a great many mistakes; for we cannot see the heart; we do not know the motives of people's actions, and therefore we may often be deceived. But God knows every secret thought—every feeling—every motive; nothing is hidden from him; and therefore he cannot be deceived. You remember, God found out and preserved Lot, the only

righteous man in the city of Sodom. And when Elijah thought that all Israel had fallen into idolatry, God knew of seven thousand who had never bowed the knee to Baal. And in all times of trouble, God's faithful servants will either be delivered from danger, like Lot, or blessed even in affliction, like the captives of Judah, of whom I am soon going to tell you. But I must reserve our lesson about them for another time, and end now with a little text, which, I hope, will help you to remember what I have been saying :—“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation.” (2 Pet. ii. 9.)

HYMN.

O Lord, I would delight in thee,
And on thy care depend;
To thee in every trouble flee,
My best, my only Friend.

When all created streams are dried,
Thy fulness is the same;
May I with this be satisfied,
And glory in thy name!

No good in creatures can be found,
But may be found in thee;
I must have all things, and abound,
While God is God to me.

O Lord, I cast my care on thee;
I triumph and adore;
Henceforth my great concern shall be,
To love and praise thee more.

QUESTIONS.

Where was the city of Babylon ?

Try to describe it to me.

What was it called in the time of its
glory ?

Who was the last king of Judah ?

Where was he taken ?

What became of the people of Judah,
and of the temple ?

Did any of the people remain in Judah ?

What became of them ?

Why were these troubles permitted to
come upon them ?

What does St Paul say about the duty
of praying for our rulers ?

Repeat a text which tells us that God
cares for and delivers those who love him.

BABYLON, (CONTINUED.)

I PROMISED, dear children, to tell you, to-day, a story about some of the Jewish captives in Babylon, who were not disobedient and rebellious against God as many of them were. The Bible mentions four particularly. They were quite young when they first went to Babylon ; and, as they were beautiful and clever, Nebuchadnezzar favoured them very much, and had them instructed in all the learning of Babylon, and gave them everything they could desire. And when they grew up, he appointed them to certain offices in Babylon. These Jewish captives were named Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel.

You remember that the people of Babylon



Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

were idolaters ; and about the time of which I am speaking, Nebuchadnezzar the king made a new idol—a very large image of gold ; and he set it up in the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon, and ordered all the people to worship it. Now, this command gave no trouble to the people of Babylon. They were poor ignorant idolaters, and, no doubt, thought that this fine idol was able to do them some great good ; and they were quite willing to obey the king by worshipping it. But it was not so with the Jews. *They* had been taught to serve the true God ; and those young men whom I have just mentioned had continued to do so faithfully and steadily, notwithstanding all the temptations of Babylon. They well knew that it would be a dreadful sin to fall down before this golden idol, when the command of their own God was, “Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them.” So they determined not to obey the command of king Nebuchadnezzar. And yet they knew, too, that they might bring themselves into great danger

by refusing to obey: for the cruel king had said, that whoever did not fall down to worship the image when the signal was given, should be cast into a burning fiery furnace. The signal was given by the sound of flute, harp, dulcimer, and many other instruments of music.

At last the time came. The plain of Dura was filled with people, all waiting and ready to fall down and worship the image; and when the signal was given, and the sound of all kinds of music was heard, then those people fell down, and worshipped the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Yes, all of them in that wide plain except three; and those three were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. We do not read of Daniel in this story; so we may suppose that he was then in another part of the country, and had not received the command about worshipping the golden image; for, if he had, we may be quite sure that, like his three friends, he would have refused to obey. Some of the people of Babylon, the Chal-

deans, as they are called, came to Nebuchadnezzar, and accused these three Jews to the king. They said, "There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego ; these men, O king, have not regarded thee ; they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." (Dan. iii. 12.) Then Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to be brought before him, and he again told them that when next the signal was given for the worship of the image, they must obey, and fall down before it ; and that, if they would not do this, they should the same hour be cast into a burning fiery furnace.

Now, dear children, picture all this to yourselves. Fancy you see before you that great wide plain, filled with people—hundreds and thousands, as far as your eye can reach. In the distance stands the great idol, rising far above their heads, and they are all gazing upon it, as if it were something very wonderful and very powerful. And yet it is but an image ; made by a

man ; made of gold, of that which has no sense, no feeling in it. Can such an image do any good to those people ? Can it save them from any evil, or give them any blessing ? No ; and yet they stand there, ready to bow down, and worship it, as though it were really a god, like our God, able to kill, and to make alive. "They have not known nor understood. None considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding. A deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand ?" (Isa. xliv. 19, 20.)

Now, look at another part of the plain. There stands the king—the great king Nebuchadnezzar. You know something of his history. You know how powerful he was, and how cruel : how he conquered Jerusalem, and burned the temple, and killed so many of the people ; and how he slew the poor children of Zedekiah, and then put out their father's eyes. Should you not fear to stand before such a king as that, and particularly if you had disobeyed

his command, and he were angry, and you were in his power? Now see: there stand before him, three of his captives; they have just been accused of breaking his orders; and he has threatened to cast them into yonder fiery furnace if they again refuse to obey. You may almost fancy that you see the smoke rising from the top of that dreadful furnace, and that you see the raging of the flaming fire within. And there stand Nebuchadnezzar's fierce executioners, ready to obey the king's command, and to cast into the fire any who will not fall down and worship the golden image. And now, how do you think Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, felt and acted at such a moment as that? How would *you*, dear children, have felt? What would *you* have done? There seemed only one way of escape, and that was a very easy way—just to fall down, and worship the image. Then Nebuchadnezzar would have been satisfied, and the accusers would have gone away, and all would have been well. But no:—one was there greater than Nebu-

chadnezzar—"The King of kings, and the Lord of lords." He had said, "Thou shalt not make any graven images; thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them." Could Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego forget this? No; and they could not forget, either, how powerful their God was, and how merciful; and that therefore he could, if he so pleased, deliver them even from the fiery furnace; or, if that were not his will, still they knew that all must be well if they trusted in him. And so these three men, full of faith, and holy courage, and boldness, answered Nebuchadnezzar, and said, "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was very angry; and he commanded that the furnace should be made seven times hotter than it was before; and then Shadrach, Meshach, and

Abednego were bound, and cast alive into the midst of the fire. The flame was so hot that it burnt to death the executioners who cast them in. But it did not burn those holy men; no, for God had commanded the flames not to touch them; and so, though they walked through the fire, they were not burned, neither did the flame kindle upon them. And this was not all. Jesus Christ himself came to them in the fire. He came to comfort and to deliver them, and to show them, and their enemies too, that those who trust in him never trust in vain. Nebuchadnezzar himself saw this, and said, "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." And then the king went to the mouth of the furnace, and cried, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither." And they came forth out of the midst of the fire.

When we read of the conduct of these three holy men, we may be reminded of

many others who, at different times, have been called not only to confess their faith in God before cruel enemies, but even to suffer death itself in consequence. You have heard of the martyrs who laid down their lives for the sake of the truth. It was God's will that they should suffer death, just as it was his will that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, should be delivered from it. But his will was wise and good in both cases; and those holy martyrs did not desire deliverance; and they did not shrink from death, however cruel and painful, if God appointed it for them. Many of them were enabled to praise God even in the fire; and they are now praising him in glory, and singing, with many more who have come out of great tribulation, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 10.)

Dear children, be thankful that in the happy days in which we live, God's people are not threatened with cruel deaths for professing his truth and obeying his com-

mands. And while you are thankful, do not forget that the faith and courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are what you and all of us should seek to have, in whatever circumstances we may be placed. Jesus says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." (Rev. ii. 10.)

But there is another furnace into which God's people are sometimes cast; and a very different one from that of which we have been speaking. And they are put there not by cruel enemies, but by their merciful God; not that they may be hurt and consumed, but that they may be benefited and blessed. Do you know what furnace I mean? I mean affliction. Affliction is often compared in the Bible to fire. God is often pleased to put his people into this furnace for their good. If everything in this world were pleasant and delightful—if there were no pain, no sorrow—then even God's people, perhaps, might love it too well, and wish to make it their home, and to live here always, instead

of looking forward to their better home in heaven, and having their hearts and affections there. And so, God is pleased sometimes to send sorrows and troubles, to teach them that this is not their rest, and to draw their hearts away from earth, that they may think more of God, and of holy and heavenly things. But, you remember, Christ came to his faithful servants in the burning fiery furnace ; and so he does now to his people in their sorrow and affliction. He comes to them, as he came to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, to comfort them, and to take care of them. And so they are happy even in the midst of pain ; for they know that all is well ; and they can say, as St. Paul did, “our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but things which are not seen are eternal.” (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

HYMN.

Lo ! round the throne, a glorious band,
The saints in countless numbers stand,
Of every tongue, redeemed to God,
Arrayed in garments washed in blood.

Through tribulation great they came !
They bore the cross, despised the shame;
From all their labours now they rest,
In God's eternal glory blest.

Hunger and thirst they feel no more,
Nor sin, nor pain, nor death deplore;
The tears are wiped from every eye,
And sorrow yields to endless joy.

They see their Saviour face to face,
And sing the triumphs of his grace ;
Him day and night they ceaseless praise,
To him their loud hosannas raise.

QUESTIONS.

Tell me the names of the four young captives of whom we read so much in the book of Daniel.

What command did Nebuchadnezzar give the people of Babylon?

What was the signal for them to do this?

What was the punishment threatened for disobedience?

Who dared to disobey?

Why?

How did they answer Nebuchadnezzar?

What was the consequence?

What happened to the men who cast them into the furnace?

What became of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego?

How were they delivered?

What other persons have been cast into the fire for the cause of truth?

Is there any other furnace of which the
Bible speaks?

Who are put into that furnace, and why?

Repeat what St. Paul says about the
afflictions of God's people.

BABYLON TAKEN.

You have already heard a good deal of the history of king Nebuchadnezzar, dear children; and if you read to yourselves the fourth chapter of the book of Daniel, you will find something more about him which I am sure will interest you. You will there read a very remarkable dream, sent by God to Nebuchadnezzar, to warn him of his sins, and of the judgment which those sins would bring upon him. And we are told, in that chapter, of the interpretation of the dream by Daniel; and how, notwithstanding, Nebuchadnezzar went on still in his wickedness until the judgment came, and his reason was taken from him, and he was driven from among men, and had his dwelling with the beasts of the

field, and was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hair became like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws. And then we read of the mercy of God to him in all this, when, after seven years, he lifted up his eyes, and his understanding returned, and he blessed God, and praised and honoured him, and was restored to his kingdom and his throne. Now, this story is just one instance more of God's justice and mercy in his government of mankind. And it shows us, too, the wonderful power of God's grace in subduing such a proud heart as Nebuchadnezzar's: and his great goodness in pardoning one so wicked. No sins are too great to be pardoned, if they are repented of; God can forgive them for Christ's sake. He says, "Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. i. 18.) And no heart is too hard to be softened and converted by his Holy Spirit. He said to the hard-hearted people of Israel and Judah, "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put

within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) But then we must pray for all these mercies. If you wish for pardon, and for a new heart, say, "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned; thou art the Lord my God." (Jer. xxxi. 18.)

Two more kings reigned in Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar. They did not, like him, cast away their idols, and turn to God; they went on in sin to the end of their lives. The last king of Babylon was named Belshazzar, and with him ended that great kingdom; and the beautiful city, which had been called "The glory of the Chaldees' excellency," was taken, and afterwards destroyed; so that the place where it had once stood became "as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah." (Isa. xiii. 19.)

All this had been foretold by God's prophets many years before. I think it will interest you to read some of these prophecies, and then to see how very ex-

actly they were all fulfilled. But, first, I must tell you what those sins were which led God thus to destroy Babylon. They were, particularly, the sins of idolatry, pride, and cruelty. You already know that the Babylonians were idolaters. The chief god they worshipped was called Bel; and a temple for his service stood in the great city of Babylon. Another of their idols was called Nebo. We read of these two idols in another chapter of Isaiah:— “Bel boweth down, Nebo stoopeth; their idols were upon the beasts and upon the cattle. They stoop, they bow down together; they could not deliver the burden, but themselves are gone into captivity.” (Isa. xlvi. 1, 2.) Those idols were unable to deliver or even to support themselves; and yet the ignorant inhabitants of Babylon trusted to them for help in the time of difficulty and trouble.

Another sin of Babylon was pride. Nebuchadnezzar, you remember, was very proud until he was humbled by God. He was proud of himself, of his great power,

and riches, and dominion. He said, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have builded?" And this pride of the kings and people of Babylon is mentioned both by Isaiah and Jeremiah :—" Sit thou silent, and get thee into darkness, O daughter of the Chaldeans, for thou shalt no more be called the lady of kingdoms. Thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever." (Isa. xlvi. 5, 7.) "Behold I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord God of hosts. The most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up." (Jer. l. 31, 32.)

And then, another sin of Babylon which made God angry, and brought his judgments upon the kingdom, was cruelty, and particularly cruelty to his own people, the Jews. All through the Bible you will find that God acted upon what he said to Abraham, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." (Gen. xii. 3.) Those people who showed kindness to Abraham's seed, always received a blessing; and those who treated them with cruelty, always met with judgment. So

it had been, you remember, with the people of Egypt, who had oppressed the Israelites, and were themselves punished with plagues, and with destruction in the Red Sea. And so it was afterwards with the people of Babylon, who took Judah into captivity, and destroyed the city of Jerusalem. For, though God was pleased many times to allow his people to fall into the hands of their enemies, on account of their sins, yet this was no excuse for the cruelty of those who oppressed them, and did not at all lessen their guilt in the sight of God. We read, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together; and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go." (Jer. i. 33.) "As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth." (Jer. li. 49.) Try, then, to remember the three great sins which brought destruction upon Babylon—idolatry, pride, and cruelty to God's people.

But I should like to show you, next, some

prophecies which tell us who the people were who should take Babylon, and the way in which they would take it. The people were the Medes and Persians. You will find them mentioned in the prophecies of Isaiah; but you must remember that Elam is the Scripture name for Persia, or you will not understand one of these texts: —“Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them.” (Isa. xiii. 17.) “Go up, O Elam; besiege, O Media.” (Isa. xxi. 2.) Cyrus, prince of Persia, led the army of the Medes and Persians against Babylon; and his name is mentioned in another prophecy, and also the wonderful way in which he should take the city: “Thus saith the Lord to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two-leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut.” (Isa. xlvi. 1.) “That saith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers.” (Isa. xlvi. 27.)

You see from all this that Cyrus was to

take Babylon ; that he was to go through the gates of brass ; and that, in some way or other, not yet known, he was to pass through the river, the Euphrates, which, you remember, flowed through Babylon ; and that the waters of that river would be dried up to make a way for him. All this is very wonderful, but all was exactly fulfilled. And now, try to bear in mind the different prophecies we have read, and I will show you how the events they predicted so many years before, all came to pass.

It was in the reign of Belshazzar that Babylon was taken. The Medes and Persians came against it, with Cyrus at their head, and besieged it for a long time. You may suppose that it was no easy thing to get into such a city as Babylon was, with its immense walls, and great gates of brass. And Cyrus could not hope to take the city by means of famine ; for there was enough food within it to last for years. So the people of Babylon made themselves quite easy, expecting that Cyrus and his army

would soon grow tired, and go away from the walls. But could Cyrus do that? No; for God's word, many years before, had declared that Cyrus should take Babylon, and that those great gates should be opened before him; and the word of God must stand. God had foretold the event; and he could bring about its accomplishment.

There is a prophecy I should like you to look at, which mentions the carelessness of the people of Babylon, and the manner in which many of them were engaged when the city was taken. "My heart panted: fearfulness affrighted me; the night of my pleasure hath he turned into fear unto me. Prepare the table; watch in the watch-tower; eat, drink." (Isa. xxi. 4, 5.) Babylon was to be taken during a night of pleasure; and, if you read the account in Daniel v., you will find that so it was.

And now, dear children, try to picture to yourselves what I am going to describe. You must suppose that you are now standing in the ancient city of Babylon. There is the grand palace of the king Belshazzar.

It is night, and a great festival is going on within. A great number of the nobles and mighty men of the kingdom are assembled there, and they are all eating, and drinking, and making merry. Belshazzar is seated among them, and before him are a number of beautiful vessels of gold and silver, filled with wine, from which he and his company are drinking. And as they drink they praise their gods—their idol gods of gold, and silver, and brass, and wood, and stone. But look again at those vessels—the bowls, and the basins, and the cups. Do you know whence they came, and for whom they were first made, and for what purpose? Those beautiful vessels once belonged to the holy temple at Jerusalem; and they were made by the direction of God himself, for his service—for the sacred uses of his house. But when Nebuchadnezzar took Jerusalem, and destroyed the temple, he preserved those sacred vessels, not because he had any respect to the worship of the true God, but on account of their beauty, perhaps, and their value. So he brought

them to Babylon, and put them in the house of his idol. And now Belshazzar has just sent for them, that he may drink wine out of them, and praise his own foolish idols, in mockery of the true God.

This is an awful sight: but I wish you to see a little more before you leave that palace. All this time there has been a great deal of noisy mirth at the feast, music, and singing, and shouting—but suddenly all is hushed—not a word is spoken, not a sound is heard. Why is this? Look at the king; his countenance is changed; his cheeks are very pale. He trembles, and his knees smite one against the other. His eyes are fixed upon the opposite wall. The nobles look too, and then they tremble as he does, and all their mirth is at an end. And what has terrified them so much? It is the warning of some dreadful judgment that is coming upon those wicked men. “In the same hour came forth fingers of a man’s hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the king’s palace; and the king

saw the part of the hand that wrote." (Dan. v. 5.) They see the writing, but none of them can read the words—they are in a strange language which they do not know:—even the wisest men of Babylon cannot interpret them. There is only one man in all that great city who can understand the wonderful writing; and that is Daniel, who, you remember, was taught by God himself the knowledge of sacred things. So Daniel is called in, and he reads the words, and gives the interpretation: "God hath numbered thy kingdom and finished it. Thou art weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." Then Belshazzar praises Daniel for his wisdom, and clothes him with scarlet, and puts a gold chain round his neck, and makes him a ruler in his kingdom.

And now, let us leave this wicked company in the palace, and walk around the city. All is silent here, for it is the dead of night, and those who are not sharing in the feast are slumbering in their beds, ex-

cept, perhaps, a few soldiers on watch, or on guard; and even they are attending very little to anything around. And now we come to the river—the great river Euphrates. Look at it; is there not something strange and unusual here? A few hours ago the waters reached nearly to the banks; now it is almost dry, so that you might walk through it without any danger or difficulty. How is this? And then, look at the gates which open from the river into the city—there is one and another wide open, though it is night, and all ought to be secured. The people have been so engaged in preparing for this great feast, that they have forgotten to close the gates. But listen—there is the sound of steps, as if persons were approaching, softly and quietly, lest they should be overheard in the stillness of night. The sound comes nearer and nearer; and it is from the river—that river which is now almost dried up. Look again—there is just light enough for you to distinguish the forms of men—armed soldiers—march-

ing along through the empty bed of the river, into the city. Now, they reach one of the great gates : how can they open it ? They have no need, for it is already open, and no one opposes them. They go through; there goes Cyrus at their head ; and the Median and Persian soldiers follow. They have entered Babylon. Ah, what confusion there is in the city now, as soon as it is known that the enemy is really within ! “One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to show the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end.” (Jer. li. 31.) And now Belshazzar and his nobles rush out of the palace, and the soldiers and the guards hasten to defend their king, and to resist their enemies ; but it is all in vain, the Medes and Persians have taken possession of the city ; they are too strong for the poor, surprised, terrified Babylonians. In this night, Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, is slain !

And what is Babylon now ? Ah ! if you were to travel to the distant land where

"the glory of the Chaldees' excellency" once stood, you would find nothing but a few ruins to mark the spot All is desolate around. Wild beasts prowl about where the walls and the gates once were ; reeds and rushes grow where the beautiful gardens flourished in the days of Babylon's glory ; and the river Euphrates, when it overflows, washes the very spot where the great city stood, in the time of Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. And this is just what had been predicted.

Before we finish our lesson, we will find a few more prophecies which foretold the desolation of ancient Babylon :—" It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation ; neither shall the Arabian pitch there ; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there ; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures ; and owls shall dwell there ; and satyrs shall dance there ; and the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their

pleasant palaces." (Isa. xiii. 21, 22.) "The sea is come up upon Babylon; she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness; a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby." (Jer. li. 42, 43.)

And now I think I need not say much in the way of lessons on this story, dear children, for you have, I hope, made them for yourselves, as you have listened to it. You do not forget the sins which led to Babylon's fall, nor the wonderful proofs which we have seen of God's faith and truthfulness in the different prophecies. And so I shall say only one thing more. Not long ago, I told you it was the duty of us all to pray for our *rulers*; to-day I wish you to learn, and to remember, that it is our duty also to pray for our *country*. See what sin brought upon Babylon of old; and I could give you many more examples of sin bringing destruction on cities, and kingdoms, and nations.

Do you not love your country, with its

happy homes, and its beautiful hills and valleys, and its fresh green fields, and its noble rivers? And do you not wish that Britain should be, as it now is, a country favoured and blessed by God, with his service established in it, and his word read and known in it, and his name honoured and feared in it? Then pray that it may be kept from sin; from those sins which led to Babylon's fall; and that its people may continue faithful to their God; and then they will still enjoy his favour and his blessing. "Happy is that people that is in such a case; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord." (Psa. cxliv. 15.)

HYMN.

My country, O my country! dear is thy name to
me!
Fair land of peace and plenty, and glorious
liberty!
On regions more luxuriant the sun perchance may
shine;
But his bright beams illumine no shores more blest
than thine.

My country, O my country! dear to my very
heart—
But whence proceeds thy glory? Why stand'st
thou as thou art?
It is not wealth, nor victory, nor conquest, nor
renown;
The Bible freely read is the gem in England's
crown.

My country, O my country! yes, dear thou art to
me;
Fair island of the ocean: bright beacon in the
sea!
Oh, may the light thou bearest for other countries
shine,
And let them too be favoured with blessings such
as thine!

My country, O my country! oft as I kneel to
pray,
I seek God's blessing on thee—his favour day by
day.
May he who England's strength and glory long
hath been,
Still keep, and bless, and favour, my country and
my queen!

QUESTIONS.

What do you know of the last part of Nebuchadnezzar's life?

Who was the last king of Babylon?

By whom was Babylon taken, and in what way?

Can you repeat any prophecies in which these things were foretold?

How was Belshazzar engaged on the night in which his city was taken?

What warning had he received?

In what state is Babylon now?

Has this been foretold in prophecy?

Repeat that prophecy.

What lessons may we learn from the fall of Babylon?

What blessings should we ask from God for our country?

Repeat a text which tells us how a country may be truly happy.

DANIEL IN BABYLON.

BUT you must not suppose, dear children, from what I said in our last lesson, that Babylon all at once became a ruin and a desolation. No ; for many years it remained as it was ; only it belonged to other nations, and had a king of its own no more. After the conquest by Cyrus, his uncle Darius, king of the Medes, took possession of it ; and at his death it became part of the kingdom of Cyrus himself. I shall have something to say to you about both these kings—Darius and Cyrus.

Daniel still remained in Babylon : and he was as great a favourite with Darius as he had been with Nebuchadnezzar. He became a very great man in the kingdom, and had much to do in the affairs of the

state and the government; and he was so faithful in all he did, that “the king thought to set him over the whole realm.”

But Daniel had something to suffer, notwithstanding all these honours; for the other great men in the kingdom envied and hated him, and wished to bring him into disgrace with Darius. So they tried very hard to find something of which they might accuse him; but they were obliged to confess, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.” (Dan. vi. 5.) Then these wicked men contrived a plan by which they hoped to get rid of Daniel altogether. They came to the king, and said to him, “King Darius, live for ever. The presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the

writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not."

Now, this conduct of the presidents may show you what sort of people these Medes and Persians were, and how cruel and tyrannical their laws were ; and you know that they were idolaters, and ignorant of the true God. Darius did not understand why it was that his princes were so desirous to have this statute, so he agreed directly to do as they wished ; and the decree was signed. And what followed ? Did their wicked plan succeed ? The enemies of Daniel had thought rightly that he would not obey such a law as this, which Darius had just signed. They knew he was a man who prayed to the true God ; and one who would do so still, whatever his enemies might threaten. And he *did* do this. " When Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house ; and his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave

thanks before God, as he did aforetime." His enemies were on the watch; and as soon as they found him praying to his God, they went to the king, and reminded him of the decree which he had signed, and of the dreadful punishment which was threatened on those who disobeyed. And then they accused Daniel, and asked Darius to have him cast at once into the den of lions. Darius was very sorry, for he loved and honoured Daniel; and he was vexed with himself for having signed the decree; and laboured all that day to deliver Daniel. But the cruel men were determined Daniel should not escape; so they came again to the king, and said, "The law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth, may be changed." Then the king yielded; and he commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions.

That night was a very sad one to king Darius. He felt he had done wrong. He had first allowed himself to be per-

suaded to make a rash decree ; and then he had yielded to wicked men, and had condemned his faithful servant to be cast into a den of lions—that he might be torn to pieces, and devoured by those savage beasts. He could not sleep that dreadful night. He spent it in fasting and mourning, and he would not suffer any mirth or amusements in the palace. We cannot wonder that Darius was miserable, although we may feel for him, and pity him. But may not his distress teach us a useful lesson ?

Have not you, dear children, often felt unhappy because you have done something foolish and wrong, and because that act has vexed or injured one whom you loved ? I am sure you have some sad remembrances of this kind. And then you have blamed yourselves, and wished the time could but come back again that you might act differently. But an act once done cannot be undone. It may be repented of, and mourned over, but it cannot be changed ; it must remain for ever. And then, when we consider that all these wrong acts of

ours are written down in the book of God's remembrance, this thought becomes a very solemn one indeed. At the day of judgment, that book will be opened and read. And how dreadful it would be to have all our sinful acts, and all our idle words, read and remembered *then!* But *we* may have a thought to comfort us, when we consider all this, which Darius had not. We know that our sins may be pardoned, that our wrong and foolish actions may be *forgiven*, although they cannot be *undone*. Yes, dear children; if you really repent, if you are sorry, not only because you have vexed a fellow-creature, but also and especially because you have offended God; and if you pray earnestly for pardon through Christ, then your sins will be blotted out, and remembered against you no more for ever. Read this beautiful promise:—"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa. xliii. 25.)

But we must go back to Daniel. As soon as the morning was come, Darius went

to the den into which Daniel had been thrown, and cried with a lamentable voice, and said, “ O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions ? ” And, oh ! how joyful Darius was when he heard Daniel’s own voice answer from within the dark den : “ O king, live for ever. My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me.” So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. And then the king commanded, and they brought the wicked men who had accused Daniel, and cast them into the den of lions. “ And the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came at the bottom of the den.”

Now, I will not talk to you to-day about the faith and courage of Daniel, nor of the kind care of God over him, because I have spoken to you already upon these subjects. But before we end our lesson I

will ask, and answer for you, one question. It is about Daniel's conduct at this time. Was it right of him, do you think, when Darius made that decree, to go and disobey it directly? Is it not our duty to obey our rulers, and to keep their laws? Does not the Bible itself tell us to do so? Perhaps some little difficulty of this kind came into your minds while you were listening to the story, and you would like to have it cleared up. Well, then, I will answer the question in a few words, which you must try to remember. It *is* our duty to obey rulers and laws always, *except* when they command anything contrary to God's word; and then we ought to obey God rather than man. This was the principle upon which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, acted, when they refused to obey Nebuchadnezzar's command to worship the golden image. And this was the rule according to which Daniel acted when Darius made the decree that none should make any petition to God or man for thirty days, except to himself. And so it is that

holy martyrs have acted in all ages of the world. They have willingly given up their lives, and suffered the punishment threatened ; but they would not, they could not consent to disobey God in order to please an earthly ruler, or to avoid his anger. Remember this rule, then ; but remember, also, that obedience to earthly rulers in every other case, is a duty expressly commanded by God himself. " Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God ; the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God." (Rom. xiii. 1, 2.)

HYMN.

Jesus, my strength, my hope!
On thee I cast my care;
With humble confidence look up,
And know thou hearest prayer.

Grant me a godly fear,
A quick discerning eye,
That looks to thee when sin is near,
To bid the tempter fly;

A spirit still prepared,
And armed with jealous care;
For ever standing on its guard,
And watching unto prayer.

I rest upon thy word;
The promise is for me;
My succour and salvation, Lord,
Shall surely come from thee.

QUESTIONS.

Who reigned in Babylon after it was taken by Cyrus?

How was Daniel treated by him, and why?

• What decree did Darius sign?

Who persuaded him to sign it, and with what intention?

How did Daniel act when he knew of this decree?

Tell me what followed when he was discovered praying to God.

What does the Bible say about obedience to rulers?

Is there any exception?

What is the rule in such a case?

Give me some examples.

Repeat a text which tells us to obey those set over us.

OTHER SCENES IN JUDAH.

I must now remind you of Cyrus, who, as I told you, took Babylon with his army of Medes and Persians, and possessed it as part of his own dominions, when his uncle Darius died.

Now Cyrus had been raised up by God for a particular purpose—not only for the destruction of Babylon, but also for the deliverance of the Jews. You remember that the Jews were at this time captives in Babylon, where they had been taken by Nebuchadnezzar. But their captivity, God had said, should last only for a certain time—seventy years; and, at the end of that time, God promised to bring them back to their own land. And as those seventy years drew nearer and nearer to their close,

God prepared all things for the fulfilment of his purpose. *

Darius died, and Cyrus became king, not only of Persia, but also of Media and Babylon. He had very large possessions, and was a powerful king, and a wise and clever man, and a great conqueror. But of all the things he did, the best and greatest was this : he made a proclamation, giving leave to all the Jews in his dominions to return to Jerusalem, and to build again their city and their temple. You may suppose how glad the poor captives were to listen to this proclamation, and how eagerly they prepared to set out on their journey to their beloved home. They were very many in number ; and Cyrus restored to them those sacred vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had taken away ; and many things also were given them by the people around, whose hearts God disposed to show them kindness.

The first thing the Jews did when they came to Jerusalem, was to set up an altar, and to offer sacrifice, and to keep the feasts

which God had appointed ; and soon after, they began to build their temple, under the direction of Joshua the high priest, and of Zerubbabel the governor, who came with them from Babylon.

The Jews prospered as long as Cyrus lived ; but when he died, and another king succeeded and reigned instead of him, trouble and persecution began again. You remember the people who were placed by the king of Assyria in the cities of Samaria, after he had taken away captive the ten tribes. These people were enemies of the Jews ; and they wrote letters to the new king of Persia, accusing the Jews of rebellion, and asking him to prevent them from rebuilding the temple, and establishing themselves in the country. The king attended to the accusation, false as it was, and sent to the Jews to desire them to leave off building. So the work of the house of God ceased for some years.

At last, another king, named Darius, came to the throne of Persia. He was more just and kind than those who had

reigned before; and the Jews began to hope that happier times were coming for them; and the prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged them to go on with their work. Their enemies again tried to prevent them, but they could not succeed; for Darius himself searched for the proclamation of Cyrus, that he might see whether the Jews had really a right to build or not. And when he found that Cyrus had given them permission, he made a decree that the work should be done with speed. So "the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, king of Persia." (Ezra vi. 14.) This Artaxerxes was another king of Persia, who reigned after Darius, and was very kind and friendly to the Jews.

The Jews had good rulers to advise and direct them at this time. Besides the

prophets Haggai and Zechariah, they had the governor Zerubbabel, and the high priest Joshua. Now there was something very remarkable in both these persons ; and I will tell you a little more about them before we go on with the story. We will first read a verse in the prophecy of Haggai, which speaks about the temple which the Jews were then building. "The glory of this latter house shall be greater than that of the former, saith the Lord of hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." (Hag. ii. 9.) Perhaps you will not understand the meaning of this ; so I will try to explain it to you. As I have just said, the Jews were at this time building their temple—the second temple, as it is called, to distinguish it from that of Solomon. Now, in many respects, this second temple was inferior to Solomon's. It was smaller, and less magnificent, and several things were wanting in it which belonged to the first temple. But God told the people that, notwithstanding this, there was one respect in

which the second temple would be greater than the first—it would be honoured by the presence of Christ himself. God said, “The desire of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.” Christ was “the desire of all nations;” the Saviour who had been so long promised, and so long looked for by his people. He would come to be a blessing to them, and to make peace by the sacrifice of himself on the cross, for the sins of the whole world. And when on earth, Christ often filled this house with his glory; for the temple of which we read in the New Testament, where Jesus so often taught, was this second temple, which was enlarged and repaired by Herod, king of Judea.

But there is another verse for us to read in this chapter. It is about Zerubbabel: “I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of

Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts." Now, all this cannot refer to Zerubbabel only, for he did not live to see the things foretold in this prophecy. Can you tell me of whom else they speak? Of one much greater than Zerubbabel—one of whom Zerubbabel was only a type—the Lord Jesus Christ. Zerubbabel was, you remember, governor of Judah; Christ is the rightful Governor of the whole world, and, in a particular manner, he is the Governor of his own people. He reigns now in their hearts; and he will reign hereafter over all the earth, as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." And when all other kingdoms are shaken or destroyed, his will remain; for his "kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." (Dan. vii. 27.)

But what is meant by being made a "signet," or seal? It was usual for the kings of Persia, when they appointed a person to any particular office, to deliver to

him their signet ring, or seal, as a sign of authority. When Zerubbabel was sent as governor to Jerusalem, perhaps the king of Persia might have given one to him. And then, besides this, the signet, or ring, is an emblem of love or affectionate remembrance. It means this in a verse which I will show you in the Song of Solomon : “ Set me as a seal upon thy heart, as a seal upon thine arm.” (Sol. Song viii. 6.) Now, when Christ came into the world, he came with authority from the Father, to exercise his office of Saviour and Mediator ; and when he comes again he will come with authority, to exercise his power as Judge and King of the whole world. And Christ, too, as you may remember I told you before, is the “beloved One” of God, in whom “his soul delighteth.”

But we must pass from Zerubbabel to another person who lived at the same time, and was also a type of Christ—I mean Joshua the high priest. We will read what is said of him in the prophecy of Zechariah :—“ Even he shall build the

temple of the Lord, and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." (Zech. vi. 13.)

Now, how did Joshua typify Christ? You know that Aaron was a type of him as High Priest, and that David and Solomon were types of him as King. Joshua was a type of him in *both* these offices, as High Priest and King too; he was "a priest upon his throne." Joshua was a person of great authority and power among the Jews; and he was particularly employed in the building of the temple. Now Jesus was like Joshua in all these respects—as High Priest to make atonement, and to intercede, and to bless his people—as King to rule over them—and as the Builder of a temple too; but not of such a temple as that at Jerusalem. Christ is the Builder of the spiritual temple—his church and people. He has been building that temple many years. It is gradually increasing, growing higher and higher, as the gospel is more

fully known and obeyed : and at last, in his own good time, he will complete it, and “ bring forth the head-stone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it.” (Zech. iv. 7.)

And now, let us go back for a few moments to Jerusalem. We left the Jews building their temple, under the protection of the Persian king Artaxerxes. It was finished in a short time, and then dedicated to God with joy and thankfulness. Soon after this, Ezra, the priest and scribe, or writer of God’s law, arrived in Jerusalem, and he was very useful in instructing the people, warning them when they sinned against God, and leading them to repent, and confess their sins, and pray for pardon. But, for some time, the walls of the city of Jerusalem were unbuilt ; they remained in ruins until the arrival of another good man named Nehemiah. Nehemiah was a servant of the king of Persia—his cup-bearer ; but when he heard of the state in which his beloved city was, he asked permission to leave Persia and the king’s

court for a time, in order that he might go to Jerusalem, and be useful to his countrymen there. The king gave him leave. So Nehemiah went to Jerusalem, and remained there some time, assisting to build the walls, and to direct the people ; and helping them to resist their enemies, the Samaritans, who still tried to hinder and persecute them in their work. But, at last, all was completed, and, through the kindness and mercy of God to his people, they were once more established and settled in their own land.

And now, dear children, I have only a few words more to say to you in conclusion. We have just been talking about the temple at Jerusalem ; and I have told you that it was an emblem of that spiritual temple of which Christ is the Builder—the church and people of God. Now, you know that a house or temple is made up of many different stones, all united together, to form one building. And so the church of Christ is made up of many different persons, all united together—one in hope, one in faith,

one in love; "an holy temple in the Lord; builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. ii. 21, 22.) Seek, then, to belong to this temple, not only in name and profession, but in deed and in truth: that you may be as "lively stones" in "the temple of the living God;" and that the beautiful promise may be fulfilled to you, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (1 Pet. ii. 5; 2 Cor. vi. 16.)

HYMN.

Jerusalem, my happy home,
Name ever dear to me!
When shall my labours have an end,
And find their rest in thee?

Jesus my Saviour, dwells therein,
In glorious majesty;
And him through every varied scene,
Onward I press to see.

Apostles, martyrs, prophets, there,
Around my Saviour stand;
And all the saints in Christ below,
Shall join the glorious band.

Jerusalem, my happy home!
My soul still pants for thee;
Then shall my labours have an end,
When once thy joys I see!

QUESTIONS.

How many years did the Jews remain in Babylon ?

Who restored them to their own land ?

What did they do on their return ?

Who opposed them, and what was the consequence ?

What kings of Persia, after Cyrus, favoured the Jews ?

Under whose direction did the Jews rebuild their temple ?

What prophets wrote at that time ?

How was Zerubbabel a type of Christ ?

How was Joshua the high priest a type of Christ ?

What is the spiritual temple of which Christ is the Builder ?

Repeat a text which speaks of the people of God as a temple.

Repeat a promise that God will dwell in that temple.

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THOUGHTLESS LITTLE FANNY
TODD'S LECTURES to CHILDREN
TODD'S SIMPLE SKETCHES
TODD'S TRUTH MADE SIMPLE
TODD'S TRUTH MADE SIMPLE and LECTURES to CHILDREN
WREATH OF FRIENDSHIP



